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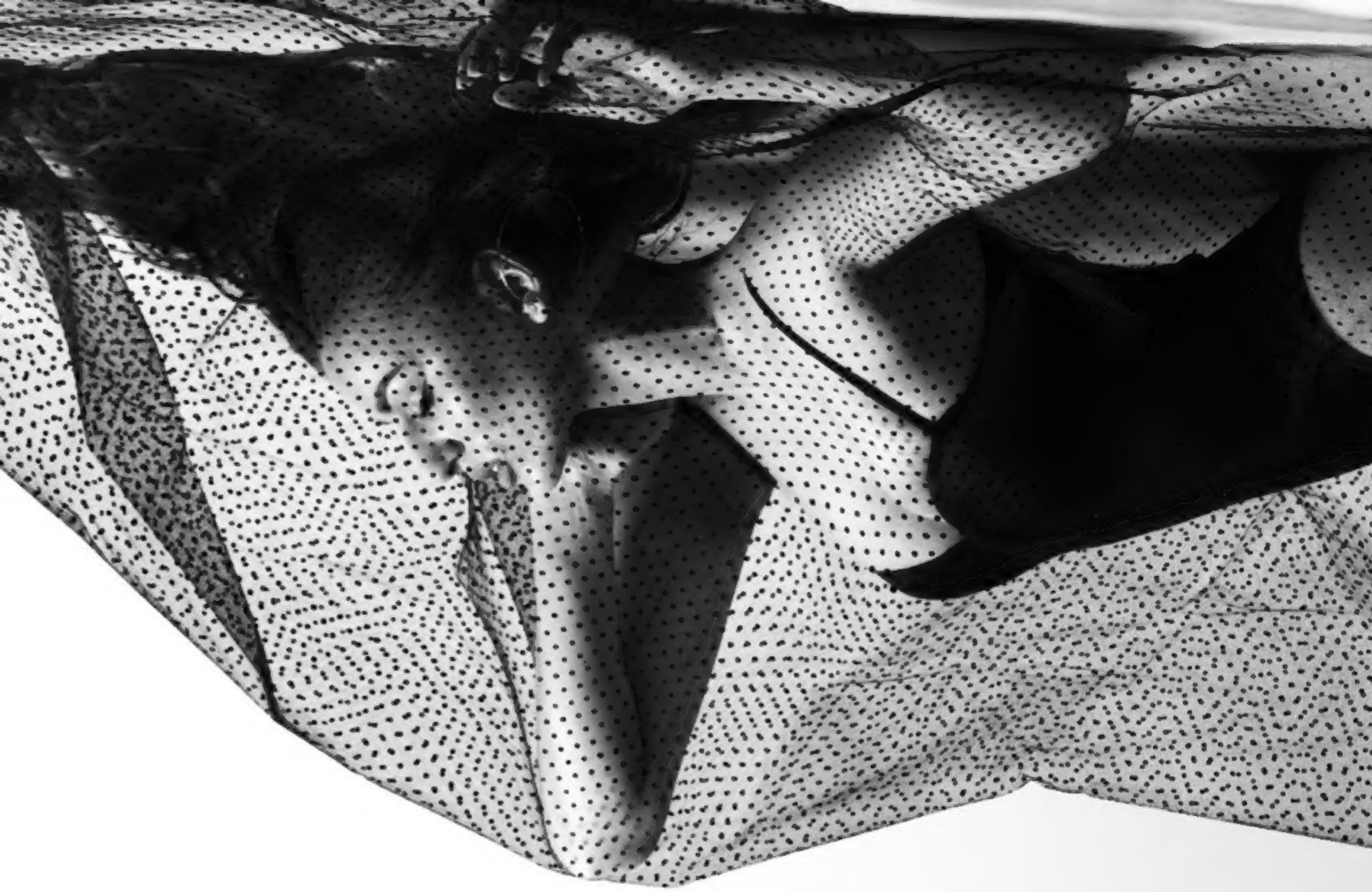

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CONTENTS

06 **SEX: FANDOMINATION**
The latest disruption in the adult industry gives control back to performers

20 **INTERVIEW: CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR**
The world-renowned news authority marks the dawn of her "sexy 60s" in a fiery conversation with Jill Filipovic

30 **FORCE OF NATURE**
Princess Nokia conjures the four elements—giant snakes and all

36 **ERIC ANDRE FOR PRESIDENT**
Cocaine, fellatio, Speedos — welcome to the Cool Party

50 **IN DRUGS WE TRUST**
What if the US decriminalized drug possession? A veteran drug-policy expert offers some insight

54 **ANTIFA IN FOCUS**
Out of the shadows and on the record: a bracing look at the antifascist movement

70 **HERITAGE: DIAMOND DAYS**
Light the candles: It's the Playboy Bunny's 60th. To celebrate, we talked to more than a dozen former cottontails about their favorite memories

90 **ANNE MARIE FOX**
From her serendipitous discovery as a model to her work on film sets, our February 1982 Playmate tells us what it's like to conquer both sides of the camera

12 **PICTORIAL**
MAE FORDAYS

40 **ON THE COVER**
DARCY

62 **PICTORIAL**
MELISA GUN

82 **PICTORIAL**
LIYA SILVER

ISSUE
No 61 | **January 2023**

PLAYBOY

fandom nation

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
CHARLOTTE RUTHERFORD

Sign up. Log in. Cash out. Repeat. Why so many people are buying into free porn's biggest competitors

BY **LINA ABASCAL**

When Elsa Jean flounces into the studio in full hair and makeup, one has to wonder why she's here. Every moment she spends on set, she's losing money. "I make about $30,000 to $40,000 a month from my OnlyFans account," says Jean (pictured), whose platinum blonde waves and wide eyes leave no question as to which animated phenomenon inspired her stage name. "I've cut my studio work way back because I really don't need to do it anymore. It takes me 30 minutes to film something. On set, it takes hours."

Although only 23 years old, Jean is a five-year veteran of the adult business — a porn superstar (1.5 million Instagram followers and counting) and now a proselytizer for OnlyFans, a membership-based social platform that hosts the content of more than 100,000 creators for more than 8 million subscribers (or "fans"). Launched in 2016, Only- Fans, while not exclusively for adult performers, has disrupted the porn industry by making it easier for sex workers to generate income off their content, shifting them away from major studios for casting, production, distribution and payment. Increasingly influential in a time when consumer demand for amateur content is trending up (videos filed in Pornhub's Amateur category boast the site's longest average view time: 15 minutes, 25 seconds), subscription sites including OnlyFans, FanCentro and JustFor.Fans are grooming a new generation of self made men and women. And many of them are adult performers working from home.

Those subscription sites are just a few of the third-party platforms whose main services support sex workers striving for economic independence. Why spend time toiling for a suit when you can sell directly to your audience on your own schedule and your own terms? It's the remote-ification of porn. The potential impact — and what's likely making some porn-tube giants anxious — is the antiquation of studio-produced adult entertainment. If sex workers can own their content outright while growing their audiences with the promise of on-demand, how can Pornhub, whose library largely comprises studio-based productions, refresh its offerings? Jean offers a vivid example to spell out the benefits of OnlyFans over free streaming: "I don't do anal unless it's on my OnlyFans or my Snapchat," she says. "That's how I locked in my people."

Most sites' subscription models involve a monthly fee for access to exclusive images, videos and chat sessions that are typically but not exclusively pornographic. Workout videos, product reviews presented by models in various states of undress and selfies of women applying makeup are also sold, based on the account. Content creators pay a fee, in the form of a percentage, to use the platform. FanCentro, which operates on Snapchat's platform but is unaffiliated with the Snap Inc.–owned app, takes 25 percent of subscription fees; in exchange it provides models with their own URLs, as well as a payment-collection service — important, given that PayPal, Venmo, Square, Cash App and nearly all other payment processors do not allow transactions for sex work or services.

Professional porn stars have had their own websites since the advent of the internet, and Pornhub allows anyone to upload content to its ever-growing database. But just as musicians complain about Spotify's payouts, performers view Pornhub's returns as poor: on average, 64 cents per 1,000 views. Jean doesn't even maintain a personal website; after talking to other actresses, she realized that "OnlyFans and Snapchat is where the money is."

• • •

Across industries, new technologies are helping purveyors sell content to niche audiences. This is the strategy behind those sponsored posts for athleisure wear or mail-order meal prep interspersed among puppies and food porn on Instagram. But when it comes to adult content, performers still have to operate in legal gray areas while taking advantage of always-plugged-in consumers' fondness for personalized subscription services (Netflix, Trunk Club) and direct-to-consumer brands (Kylie Jenner's Lip Kits, Casper).

Stephanie Michelle, a hentai-inspired performer, recently shifted her focus to OnlyFans from other platforms. There, she forfeits 20 percent of her earnings from her content, all of which sits behind a paywall. Daily, she posts 30-second to minute-long clips while chatting with

her fans. Such engagement helps her know which content they like best. In turn, fans remain satisfied, paying customers longer.

Even Pornhub's headliners are on OnlyFans, including Riley Reid, the Los Angeles–based porn star who recently tallied more than 1 billion views on Pornhub. In fact, she's on almost every third-party site so people can find her no matter where they're searching. "I monetize greater off myself by working for myself," she says. "I think more girls are realizing that you can get more out of you selling your body online and owning your own content."

Reid doesn't want to miss an opportunity to sell content, and she doesn't. People are consistently buying subscriptions and accessing video clips on networks she doesn't even promote. Her primary focuses are her FanCentro-operated Snapchat and her personal website, ReidMyLips.com, where she offers studiolevel porn content for around $9.99 per video or monthly passes for $34.99.

For those with less dedicated audiences, building a custom site can be more of a hassle than it's worth. Hoesha, an OnlyFans account owner in Arizona, tried to sell adult content on her own platform, with mixed results. Messaging fans individually was not too time-consuming; collecting payment, however, became tricky once her original payment processor banned her after too many fans wrote explicit messages in their payment memos. She was also tired of fans haggling over price.

"My rates are my rates. I can plainly say what I'm selling and be as explicit as I need to be with my subscribers," she says of OnlyFans. The 20 percent cut frustrates her, but owning her content is a perk. "At the end of it all, it's all yours. You have the rights to your content, whereas with Snapchat or sending clips directly, you don't. If my content leaks, OnlyFans makes it way easier to track down the source." After less than half a year on the platform, Hoesha, whose offerings last year included a nude review of Popeyes viral chicken sandwich, has nearly enough subscribers to stay afloat without a day job.

Danny Labito, an amateur gay fetish creator from Detroit, moved his fans from Pornhub's Modelhub, where his earnings were bleak, to OnlyFans. Occasionally some of his loyal Only-Fans viewers will message him for private commissions. He negotiates rates for custom content on Twitter, Instagram and e-mail, and his patrons pay him through PayPal or Cash App. Selling sexual content violates both these processors' terms, but he uses them anyway. "There aren't many other payment options for sex workers," he says. In his first three months, he made $7,000 from OnlyFans subscriptions and tips, supplementing the full-time job he holds while he finishes college.

For someone like Reid, managing content sales and subscribers can become nearly impossible. It's one of the reasons she finally decided to partner with FanCentro — which promised to do "all the dirty work" — after years of offers to "join the premium Snapchat bandwagon."

Joining that bandwagon would mean manually adding and deleting users from her accounts — arguably the most tedious part of using premium Snapchat. If someone cancels a subscription, access must be revoked manually or Reid risks sending content for free. For a sense of scale, Reid says she regularly hits Snapchat's maximum of 5,000 followers per account and has to create sister accounts — all of which distribute the same content. The operation is so large that Reid has three smartphones solely so she doesn't have to log in and out on one device.

• • •

As these third-party tools multiply, claiming they can help sex workers make up to $100,000 a month (the amount Reid says FanCentro estimates she could pull in), sex work is far from autonomous or fail-safe. Because FanCentro functions with Snapchat but is not involved with Snap Inc., creators who violate the app's industry-typical terms by uploading "pornographic content" can be banned. Jean's Snapchat has been deleted three times already.

"I'm not sure what will happen when Snapchat catches up and everyone is removed, but as of now, I encourage all the girls, and myself, to milk it as much as possible," Reid says.

I ask Jean if subscription sites can contribute to the normalization of sex work. "Even though not everyone will do it, everyone wants to do it," she tells me. "When I get online, I'll see girls who aren't in the industry. They're Instagram models. Their followers sign up because they're like, 'I've been wanting to see this girl naked.' "

This doesn't make them porn stars, at least not according to Reid. "I don't think they understand what it's like to go to set and have sex with someone you've never met, where there's a guy over there with the boom," she says.

The truth is, with the options now available, they'll likely never have to. But cracking the surface of mainstream consciousness through OnlyFans and FanCentro doesn't always equate to mainstream acceptance. After all, subscribe now buttons don't change laws or end discrimination. Not overnight. Not even over years.

The trouble is that today, self-promotion on the internet — and with it, self-acceptance — is a necessity. To be successful on these so-called fan sites, visibility is required. Keeping your business a secret doesn't result in more sales. This means legions of sex workers are actively advertising their services on social media to millions, cashing in every day that they're not being shut down.

For all their disruption, these sites have hardly progressed the sex workers' rights movement. "Sex work is work," as the rallying cry goes. They have, however, created opportunities for sex workers to build community and financial mobility in the age of FOSTA-SESTA, when basic online tools such as message boards have been shuttered in the government's attempt to end "sex trafficking." Amid the exodus from studios, the promised land remains what it's been for decades: validity, rights and respect across legal systems.

As Reid argues, "It's such a normal thing for people to be selling their bodies on the internet." ■

PLAYBOY'S party jokes

THIS ISSUE'S BATCH COURTESY OF COMEDIAN AND TELEVISION WRITER **DEMI ADEJUYIGBE** AND FRIENDS

SOMETIMES I feel like we're really making progress toward equality. Then I remember there are dogs on Instagram that make more money than most black people. — *Edgar Momplaisir*

TWO women walk into a bar. One of them sits down and immediately apologizes to the other:

"Were you going to sit here?"

"No, I'm sorry, no!" says the other. "I want to stand."

The first apologizes for being in her way. The second apologizes for being so flustered. This continues into infinity or until one of them gets elected president in 2044. — *Tawny Newsome*

THERE'S no better sign that we need equal representation than my getting called Kumar in YouTube comments. Guys, that movie came out in 2004. If you're going to be racist, at least be topical. — *Rekha Shankar*

I didn't want to believe gentrification could happen to me, but the guy next door screams our neighborhood's walkability score every time he orgasms. — *Brittani Nichols*

A standout float in the Straight Pride Parade is the one with a bunch of guys lounging around, each one forcing his girlfriend to watch *Bloodsport* while she texts another dude. — *T.N.*

WHEN black people talk about supporting black-led films, someone always complains, "Oh, but it would be racist if I went and supported white-led films!" That wouldn't be racist, just expensive and time-consuming. *Demi Adejuyigbe*

I didn't have a pen, so I signed a check with eyeliner from the bottom of my bag. That's 11th-wave radical feminism. — *Ayo Edebiri*

THE worst thing you can call a black person is the N word, but the worst thing you can call a white person is "cracker," which is a delicious salty treat you serve with a variety of cheeses at parties. I think that says all you need to know about equality in this country. — *B.N.*

I wish I had the confidence of a ginger telling me, "We too have faced oppression for our appearance." — *R S.*

THE school-to-prison pipeline is so bad that when *The Shawshank Redemption's* Andy Dufresne escaped, he ended up back in the eighth grade. — *Carl Tart*

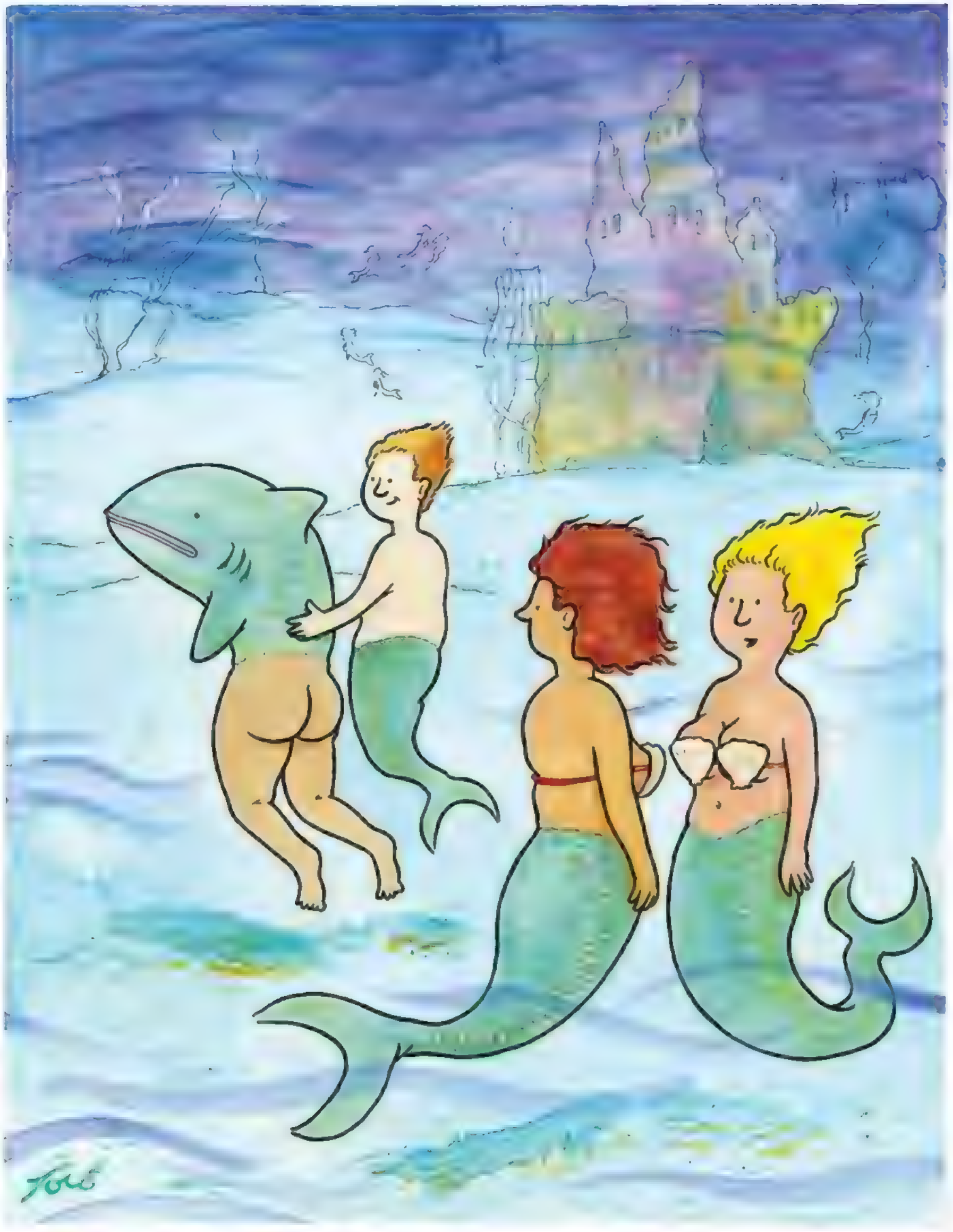
IT'S not fair when someone says white people have always had it easy. Imagine how tough it was for them to talk about music the year that "Niggas in Paris" was big. — *D A.*

IF a woman accepts a promotion, she is legally required to renounce the formal job title and instead be called a badass. — *R.S.*

WHICH is worse, being African American in Hollywood and getting mistaken for someone in *Black Panther* or getting no calls even to do background work in *Black Panther?* — *D.A.*

HOW do you know when a relationship is serious? When the woman takes you home to meet her vibrator. — *A.E*

MEN should have as much control over women's bodies as desire to see the *Cats* movie· none. — *Lou Wilson*

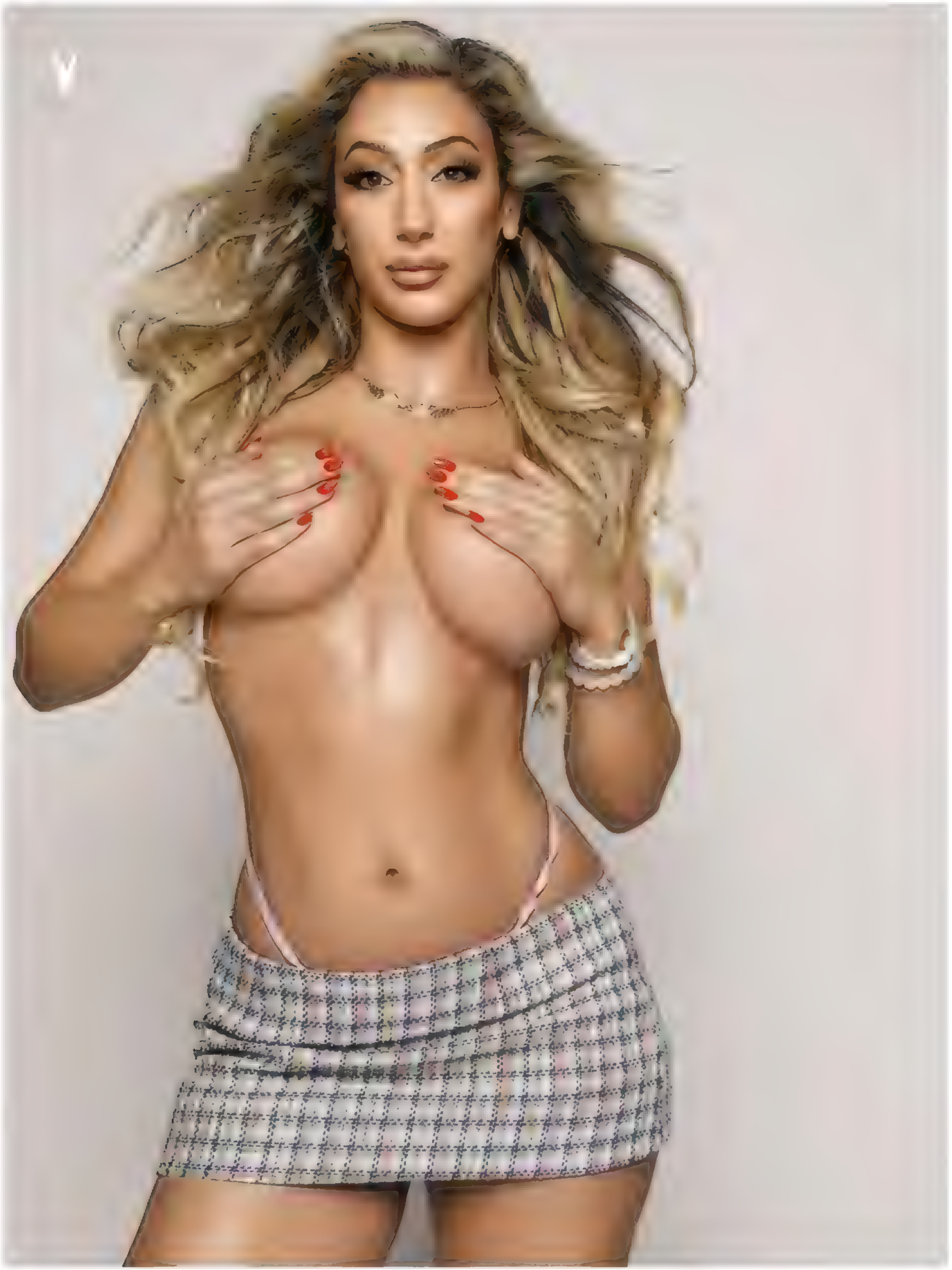


“He’s an ass man.”

MAE FORDAYS

Instagram **@Mae.Fordays**

HMUA **@michellecuevasmua**



Happy to have you featured in Playboy! Can you give us a bit of a background on your career as a model and where it all started? I began dancing at the strip club while in college picking up the occasional modeling gig but as my network of photographers and other models grew, I got put on to more lucrative opportunities.

What are some of your best career highlights so far? After graduating from university, I decided to go on a dancing/modeling tour, at first, I stayed within the US and worked in 8 states but as my confidence in traveling solo grew I ventured internationally. I'd say the 7 months I spent in Australia was one of my best highlights and that's ultimately helped me gain a more positive perspective on the industry.

Social media is a very powerful tool, given your massive following, what are some of the challenges you face when it comes to marketing your brand and maintaining a solid following? Getting deleted is a major challenge, most social media platforms want us to repress our sexuality which does not come easy, 50 years from now people are gonna look back at this time in shock at how normal behavior was being repressed on such a mass scale.

Can you give us a breakdown of a typical day in the life of a glamorous model on set? Arrive to set, spend 2 hours in hair & makeup, coordinate outfits with the photographer to suit each backdrop & then work it!

Now we know there are some pretty perks that come with being a beautiful woman, what would say are your favorite ones? Meeting admirers from around the globe & the ease it makes growing my network internationally.

Given that you're a stunning woman who undoubtedly gets a lot of attention, what are some of the nicest things men have done to try and get your attention? I love it when a man sees me at a nice restaurant with a girlfriend and covers our meal and drinks.

What makes you feel absolutely sexy? Pretty lingerie & some sexy high heels.

3 things that you can't go a day without? Coffee, music and masturbation.

Anything exciting we should be on the lookout for coming through this year from you? Yes! I will be streaming 'Just Dance Now" on twitch I'm hoping to make it a daily practice.

Where can our readers find out more about you and stay updated with your current events and adventures? All my socials are @Mae.Fordays find me on Twitter and IG.

PLAYBOY INTERVIEW: CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR

A candid conversation with the unbreakable newswoman on everything from immigration to #MeToo, the power of the press to the dawn of her "sexy 60s"

An impeachment scandal is in full swing, and attacks on the press erupt almost daily from the White House. The year, of course, is 1973.

In his *Playboy Interview* from that year, legendary CBS anchor Walter Cronkite was "visibly steamed" by a question about the Nixon administration — which at that time was halfway between the Watergate break-in and the president's resignation — and its war on the news media. The fatherly newsman gave a strident critique of what he called a "well-directed campaign against the press, agreed upon in secret by members of the administration."

In 2019, another American president has declared war on the free press and is facing impeachment. But today's most venerated defender of newsmen's rights is not a newsman at all: It's Christiane Amanpour, the British Iranian war reporter turned CNN and PBS host. Crisp, elegant and unshakably poised, Amanpour uses her nightly CNN International show to delve into global affairs, interrogate newsmakers and occasionally rip to pieces the lies and obfuscations uttered by the world's most powerful men. Amanpour began her reporting career in a world just introduced to 24-hour news coverage, and even in an age of fake news and overflowing Twitter time lines she remains our guide across borders worldwide.

Born in London to a British Catholic mother and a much older Iranian Muslim father, Amanpour spent a charmed childhood in Tehran, riding Arabian stallions and skiing through the winter. At 11, she was sent to a British convent school; she would remain in the English educational system through high school. By the time she enrolled at the University of Rhode Island to study journalism, Iran was in the throes of a revolution. The Amanpour family fled to England, starting anew in a cramped flat. For the nascent journalist of the family, that historical moment marked a turning point. "I knew what I wanted to do," she said in a 2013 Mediabistro interview. "I wanted to be a foreign correspondent."

Starting out at Providence, Rhode Island's NBC affiliate, Amanpour soon heard about a new network called CNN. It was a ragtag place, she was told, where they might be more amenable to an olivetoned British-accented woman reporting the news. She made the switch, and Christiane Amanpour as we know her was born.

"Frankly, the press has been part of the problem by thinking that objectivity means neutrality or false equivalence."

"There are hundreds of millions of women around the world who don't dare imagine that they have a right just to be happy."

"I'm pretty middle-of-the-road in most of my views except when it comes to genocide and climate truths."

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **CHRISTELLE DE CASTRO**

Name a major conflict of the past 30 years, and Amanpour reported from it. Operation Desert Storm was her first, but she truly cut her teeth covering the Balkans, where her sense of moral outrage mounted as she watched Serb atrocities and the targeting of her friends and colleagues. Reporting the news, she concluded in Bosnia, requires accuracy and proportionality, not simplistic both-sidesism — an ethical code she has since called "truthful, not neutral."

That ethos has served her well as she's interviewed petulant leaders and seldom-questioned strongmen — she had an exclusive sit-down with soon-to-be ousted Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak in the midst of the revolution in Cairo, was among the last journalists to interview Libya's Moammar Gadhafi and was once told to "be quiet" by Yasir Arafat before he hung up on her— and shapes her approach to the Trump era. It has also made her a credible voice in the age of #MeToo: She's a reporter for whom feminism is a simple commitment to equality, not an extremist takeover that threatens to destroy due process. And it makes her a fitting replacement for Charlie Rose, a man felled by his alleged predation on and harassment of younger women, and in whose place Amanpour & Company now airs on PBS

In 1998 she married former U.S. assistant secretary of state James Rubin; two years later she had their son, Darius, at the age of 42.N ow, at 61 and recently divorced after 20 years of marriage, Amanpour is opening a new chapter she calls her "sexy 60s." That storyline started in familiar territory: reporting. Her six-episode series Sex & Love Around the World premiered on Netflix in 2018, revealing Amanpour as a winning and surprisingly cheeky chronicler of female lust, pleasure and desire.

Amanpour sat down with journalist (and freelance CNN.com columnist) Jill Filipovic for playboy in Amanpour's office at CNN's London headquarters, where a sign on the door, illustrated with an AK-47, reads prohibit entrance with weapon. Filipovic reports, "Christiane Amanpour has little patience for theoretical musings about the state of journalism or feminism, and even less for armchair critics who haven't done the work or taken the risks. More than once she engaged with a question of mine before rejecting it, but even in her dismissals she was thorough and illuminating. Just sitting in her office — lined with trophies, a framed picture of her son atop her crowded desk — you can imagine she would remain collected and steely even when bullets are flying. You walk away holding her in tremendous esteem and, not that she'd give a damn, liking her a lot — even when she calls you out on the first sentence of your interview."

PLAYBOY: The president of the United States has called reporters scum and slime.
AMANPO UR: I cannot believe you started with the president of the United States.
PLAYBOY: Going for it, you know? He has targeted CNN in particular as a purveyor of fake news. Public trust in the media is at an all-time low in the United States. You've made a career out of telling some of the world's most important stories. What do you make of this moment for press freedom and the role of journalism in society?
AMANPO UR: The president has been very clear from the beginning that the strategy is to delegitimize whoever he thinks is an opponent, whether it's the press, a foreign leader, the chairman of the Federal Reserve — whoever seems to stand in his way. That's his thing. Our job is to not accept that framing from anybody who seeks to delegitimize the free, independent, democratically protected press. I have a platform to bring the truth, to bring evidence, to bring stories, to bring what's really happening in the world and in the United States to the audience. I think the rest of it is up to the audience. They now have responsibility.
PLAYBOY: But lots of viewers aren't taking that on; many are simply seekin out publications and television shows that confirm their prior beliefs. Are viewers the ones who are abdicating their civic responsibility?
AMANPO UR: There are a lot of people who believe the conspiracy theories and the lies that are told about us or about what's going on in the world. But I notice the backlash to all these lies and conspiracy theories, and I appreciate the fact that our ratings are up, readership is up, subscription is up for real truth-telling platforms. I'm not a Pollyanna. I don't think we're out of danger. I think, though, that those of us who have been doing this for a long time, who are experienced and know where the truth lies, have a responsibility to stand up for the truth — even in public, even if it's unpopular.
PLAYBOY: You've risked your life for stories. Friends and colleagues of yours have given their lives to bring us the news. Just on a visceral human level, how does it feel when you hear the president of the United States call reporters slime?
AMANPO UR: I haven't heard the word slime, but I'm hurt and obviously offended when I hear an absolutely vital

pillar of democracy and civil society being trashed from within. But it also redoubles my commitment to fighting against it. I know firsthand the danger of living in a world where lies are portrayed as facts. For me, the difference between truth and lies is the difference between freedom and democracy and dictatorship. So I'm very troubled by this. But I'd still love to interview President Trump.

PLAYBOY: There's a debate roiling the press right now about how to cover the president's lies — or those of anyone who comes face-to-face with journalists and spreads absolute falsities. How much airtime do you give that?

AMANPO UR: You don't. You counter it. The concept of fake news is not something Donald Trump invented. Others might have called it propaganda. Just in fairly recent history, the Soviet Union was a master of this. The Soviets, now the Russians — that's their war by other means. That's how they fight to keep dominance in their sphere. We've got plenty of experience, we in this free press, and we know how to counter it. We just have to do that without getting hysterical, overly despondent and overly emotional.

PLAYBOY: The New Yorker and Errol Morris both got in hot water for interviewing or planning to interview Steve Bannon. The argument was essentially that he's a propagandist, not someone whose voice should be amplified, which exemplified the idea of de-platforming. Is there anyone you would never interview or have on your show?

AMANPO UR: Right now I refuse to have climate deniers on my show. I will not have people who deny scientific evidence. I'm very much wedded to the concept of fact-based, evidence-based empirical truth. People who say it doesn't exist are just equivocating and are relativists. Frankly, the press has been part of the problem by thinking that objectivity means neutrality or false equivalence. It no more means that when we're discussing climate and science than it does when we're talking about genocide and ethnic cleansing. When you pretend you're being objective by equating unequal facts and unequal moralities, you're not telling the truth. You're telling lies. In the worst case, you're an accomplice to the worst results of that.

I have no time for this conversation about whether we should or shouldn't be there.

PLAYBOY: But how do you navigate moral outrage in a place where you don't know the culture very well, where you're an outsider?

AMANPO UR: I hope this doesn't sound arrogant, but I've grown up all over the world. I've traveled all over the world I grew up in a patriarchal society with a Muslim father and a Catholic mother — an Iranian father, a British mother. I was taught from a very young age about the morals we learn first and foremost through our religious upbringing, whether it's Christian, Jewish, Muslim or whatever. Thou shall not kill. Respect your father and your mother. Thou shall not lie. All those things we grow up with form the basis of a moral platform. It's true that I don't know the ins and outs of every single culture, but I've learned a lot over the 30 years I've traveled the world examining people's cultures. I learn as I go. But I don't consider

my reporting to be some kind of moral diatribe; I look to the humanity of every situation. I see people in every story I cover, people with lives and loves and stories to tell who aren't just statistics in war or famine or whatever political crisis they might be caught up in

PLAYBOY: Have you ever felt that the push to find truth in a complicated situation and not be focused on neutrality has taken you away from your obligations as a reporter?

AMANPO UR: Never. I challenge anybody to produce any piece of my reporting they think fits that description. Never. Which is not to say I got everything right all the time. One of the things I like about going places and spending a long time there is that the story comes into focus ever more sharply. I've never presumed to be an expert from day one on the ground. I've always said that the first stories you see will inevitably be pretty simple. The longer you're there, the more the layers will manifest themselves.

PLAYBOY: One criticism of foreign correspondence as a field is that it's neocolonial: Foreign correspondents go in, extract news from poorer countries and run stories that are simplistic or sensational or that simply portray other cultures as backward and in need of saving. Is there a diversity problem in international reporting?

AMANPO UR: Do I think there should be more diversity? One hundred percent. Do I think there should be more gender equity? Do I think there should be diversity in every level of news coverage, and in every level of global society? Yes, I absolutely do. But do I apologize? Certainly not. If we didn't do it, who would? The typical complaint comes from armchair warriors sitting at home in their pajamas, tweeting, instagramming and facebooking from 10,000 miles away. Tell me, which is worse? That's a whole lot worse than those of us who get up and go there and find the stories.

PLAYBOY: I think there are two arguments. One would be that it's unbalanced: How many Africans are in the White House press corps? The other is that publications like The New York Times and networks like CNN should be relying more on local journalists to cover their own nations.

AMANPO UR: I think this criticism is crap, if you want my honest opinion. As I said, what is the other option? Furthermore, things are changing, and I think that criticism is out-of-date. I think my profession was instrumental in turning around the West's indifference to Bosnia and then to Kosovo. We helped spur our democracies to intervene, to stop a genocidal slaughter in Europe and therefore save their own dignities and standings as well as lives on the ground. That's a good thing. We did that, and I'm proud of it. We might have had that impact had we been en masse in Syria, but we weren't, because ISIS was beheading people, starting with poor James Foley. And so we were not able to go there. Who did we rely on? Syrians, Syrian journalists. They told the story of their war.

PLAYBOY: At great personal risk.
AMANPO UR: At great personal risk and with great professionalism. I ask myself, what would Obama have done if the same press corps that was in Bosnia in the 1990s had been in Syria, telling the same human stories day after day and making it impossible for our democracies to turn their heads in the face of wanton slaughter and wholesale violation of all the values and policies the West says it not only upholds but seeks to promote around the world? It's a terrible realization that we failed in Syria. The Syrian journalists did a great job, but we failed. The Trump administration is now pulling out American forces, and ISIS is not defeated.

We failed in Rwanda. We didn't go to Rwanda because, if I'm not mistaken, the African and the Western press were focused on the goodnews story of Nelson Mandela's election in South Africa, a fantastic story. They were focused on O.J. Simpson in the United States. And in three months, 800,000 to 1 million black people were slaughtered in Rwanda. That's a huge burden to bear. What I'm saying is that I have no time for this conversation about whether we should or shouldn't be there.

PLAYBOY: Speaking of things you might have no time for, you're one of the most famous female journalists in the world. What are you sick of getting asked about being a woman in this field?
AMANPO UR: Oh, that's interesting. What am I sick of getting asked? "What does it mean to be a woman in this field?" More and more women have joined this particular profession as foreign correspondents, in front of the camera, behind the camera, on shows and the like. That's a huge change from when I started out in 1990. But until we have more women at the top of news organizations, there will still be an issue — not with how women are represented but how the world is represented.

Treating women equally is not just a human right or a charity. If women as well as men in our work were determining what stories were going to be covered so there wasn't such a massive imbalance, eventually you would get a different look at the world. Women have made a big difference in how we cover the world — and I think our male colleagues have learned from us — because in addition to covering the bang-bang and the hardware and all of that, our natural instinct is that everyone has a human story. The thing I've learned throughout my career, and I guess from my childhood, is that we're all very similar. We all, wherever we come from, have the same hopes, the same dreams, the same desires. And we need to emphasize that more and more, because there's a sense these days — especially with nationalism, populism and anti-immigration, whether it's in the United States, parts of Europe or elsewhere — that somehow there is a group of people who are less than human, who are really scary, who would do us harm, who would, if we let them in, somehow destroy our countries. It's not borne out by the facts, and it's sad that today those thoughts and those politics are still being perpetrated. Too many political leaders are appealing to the fear factor rather than to the hope factor.

What am I sick of getting asked? "What does it mean to be a woman in this field?"

PLAYBOY: Give me an example: When have you covered a story differently?
AMANPO UR: In my coverage of the war in Bosnia I almost never went to the briefings at the beginning, and I didn't do the politics. I remember telling stories of what it was like as an ordinary person to be caught in a medieval siege from 1992 all the way through the 1990s until the war was stopped. The first winter, I'll never forget, professors, engineers, scientists, artists were cutting down trees for wood, burning their books for heat, picking grass and herbs from the central islands along Sniper Alley, just trying to survive.
PLAYBOY: Your personal and professional lives have hinged on migration and movement. What perspective do you wish Americans had on the immigration debate? How could we be thinking about it differently?
AMANPO UR: First and foremost it is absolutely true that over many, many years the United States administrations and Congress have failed to implement a rational immigration-reform process, program or set of laws. They've just failed. What we're seeing is a whole load of ad hoc policies that are made with a huge amount of short-termism that then affect real human beings. So I think one story that's not told enough about the Southern border of the United States is the push factor: What is causing people to get up and take that very dangerous route by foot, many with their families, to come from Central America or wherever it might be to try to find refuge? The economic and environmental fallout there is not being told.

People wish to stay in their own countries if they can. That's the one thing I've learned from traveling and covering war and refugees. It's not as if everybody's dying to suddenly leave their countries and come to the U.S. Most people who come are forced to by crime, war, famine, dictatorship or lack of freedom in their own countries. They would rather stay where they are. That's why, to me, it would seem that the best foreign policy of a nation is not only to keep itself and its economy and standing in the world secure but also to do its utmost not to close its borders and hunker down; a nation needs to do what it can to make other parts of the world livable. I wish leaders could look a bit more broadly at what would really prevent a mass influx of people seeking basic safety and freedom and something to eat.
PLAYBOY: So I have this quote from you. In Sheila Weller's book The News Sorority, you say, "All my energy, my emotion, my intellect went into my work. During the '90s, people would ask me, 'When are you going to settle down?' And I'd say, 'I don't think I'll ever have a child.' " And then you did. What changed?
AMANPO UR: What changed is that I felt I needed to humanize myself a little. Actually it was pretty funny. One of my producers, Robert Wiener, was instrumental in CNN's coverage of Baghdad during the war. He once said to me, "So, Christiane, what are you going to do,

snuggle up with all your awards? Don't you think you need to get serious about your personal life?" I suddenly started to think about it, and I said, "Yeah, maybe I should focus a little bit more on my personal life and see what happens." And I did. I started to make myself more open. I'd had great love affairs in the field, on the road, but I was absolutely committed to my career and to the stories. I could not have done what I did had I had the responsibility to stay alive and to keep leaving the field and going home. I couldn't have done it, end of story. I didn't really think about my own safety. You're young, you think you're immortal, you don't necessarily have anybody to stay alive for. You're balls to the wall. You're doing the job and you're loving it. So I was a late starter in that regard. I had my kid at 42, and it is literally the joy of my life. But I can tell you one thing: As soon as I had my child, I suddenly started to feel more nervous about going overseas, about going to war zones, about maybe succumbing, like so many of my friends and colleagues had done.

PLAYBOY: I don't mean to sound insensitive, but why have a kid then?

AMANPO UR: Well, it's a good question. To be honest, I didn't necessarily think I had to have a kid, but I cannot imagine my life as rich as it has been since I've had my kid. Nothing in the world will match what my child means to me. Nothing, nothing, nothing.

But fast-forward now to these young kids. I had a 26-year old young man on my show recently, a member of Extinction Rebellion, who, like many millennials, are asking themselves if they're going to have children. Are they going to be able to bring children into this world we've created for them through our wanton short-termism and greed? That's a whole different existential crisis than we had in my generation. Would I have a kid? Well, for me the question was could I still be a professional. Today the question is whether it's moral to bring a child into this world These are tough issues our young people are wrestling with

PLAYBOY: Your show replaced Charlie Rose's on PBS after he was sacked for sexual harassment He's just one of a long list a of men whose behavior has gotten them removed from their positions as part of the #MeToo movement.

AMANPO UR: And all of them still deny it.

PLAYBOY: You told Variety that you don't think the pendulum has swung too far. It's a question everyone's being asked: "Has #MeToo gone too far?" You said no. But you also said we can't have a one-sizefits- all solution to these issues.

AMANPO UR: Correct, and those are not two opposing thoughts. Do I think it's gone too far? The answer for me is categorically no. This movement has completely changed the dynamic of the world. It's not perfect. It's not that now every woman is safe or every woman has a clear path up in her career or every woman can get the truth out. That's not the case. What it has done is shift in an irreversible way the expectations around what women have been forced to endure in silence. It has shifted entirely the notion of consent. I believe that in order to really change this, men have to be involved in the solutions. And I say that because I'm a feminist, because I'm the mother of a boy and I want my boy to grow up in a safe, consensual society, hand in hand with women, and because I believe this world will never get any better unless in every level of society men and women are on equal footing and working together

PLAYBOY: So outside of the most obvious criminal cases that should be dealt with by the justice system, what does a solution look like?

AMANPO UR: Obviously crimes have been committed. We should not have people protecting themselves by having their lawyers or lobbyists or whoever they are getting victims to sign nondisclosure agreements, forcing people to accept pittances as payoffs or payouts. We should hold the serious offenders accountable, 100 percent. But not every action is a criminal action. And not every action is the same. I think a huge amount of effort and accountability can be meted out without necessarily firing or destroying somebody's life

But much like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa or those kinds of post-conflict resolutions, it requires all sides — in this case all genders — to work together. It requires those whose wrongdoing is less than a criminal wrongdoing to fess up, to work with whoever they need to work with on whatever level to atone. Some people have perhaps been accused unfairly, and we need to be very aware of that, because we're not going to have a solid foundation for this movement if it looks like it's unfair and just a witch hunt.

PLAYBOY: One thing feminists emphasize about this movement is that, though we talk about sexual harassment, it's really not about sex; it's about power.

AMANPO UR: And sex.

PLAYBOY: And it's about the ways in which sexually harassing women are more than just "it makes us feel bad." It's that it systematically pushes us out of opportunities and out of particular fields. So is part of the solution to replace the men who have done wrong with women?

AMANPO UR: Well, listen, you're going to ask me because that's my case. Charlie Rose does not accept these accusations. You have to put his perspective in it as well. But I can say only this: I am absolutely thrilled and I think it's a great statement that a woman has taken this job at this particular time. I'm not just a token woman. I'm a woman who has risen through the ranks and hopefully proved my competence, my integrity and my lack of compromise on those issues. So I think it's completely and utterly apt. The amount of feedback I've had from women absolutely confirms that for me. Actually, I don't even think it should be a question. I think women have proved themselves over and over again, and the notion that we should be grateful for any tidbits or crumbs or pairing with anybody else is ancient history. What irritates me is that when people of privilege complain about, let's say, a woman getting this job, they're complaining about

How much luckier can I get? Seriously—it's not a rhetorical question.

the field being level. That's all. And that's not acceptable. We have to have a level playing field now.

PLAYBOY: The #MeToo observation I've found most resonant comes from Rebecca Traister in New York magazine: "In hearing these individual tales, we're not only learning about individual trespasses, but for the first time getting a view of the matrix in which we've all been living. We see that the men who have had the power to abuse women's bodies and psyches throughout their careers are in many cases also the ones in charge of our political and cultural stories." How do you think it changes the dynamic to have women like you now in a position of telling our political and cultural stories?

AMANPO UR: First and foremost, the ultimate contradiction to all of these accusations against Harvey Weinstein is that he's been accused of some very serious criminal wrongdoing and misconduct against women, and yet he produced some great films. There's no doubt about it; our cultural environment might have been poorer without those films. But the point you're making is correct. If we accept that our society's story will be told by only one gender, it's not the whole story. That's what we're still struggling for. It will take decades, if not centuries, more. And whoever's in a position of power, privilege and entitlement lets go of it with great difficulty. What they need to know is that most of us are not looking to overtake and dominate; we want to share in the telling of our personal and global narrative, or our historical narrative won't be told accurately.

PLAYBOY: I don't work in many conflict zones, but I do work in humanitarian crisis zones. One of the more jarring things for me is coming home from a crisis and having a nice bottle of wine and dinner in a beautiful restaurant. It so deeply highlights the random luck of being born in one place or another. How do you navigate that contrast, and does it ever get easier to be in the places you work and then come back to a beautiful home in London?

AMANPO UR: I remember very strongly the first times I came out of the siege of Sarajevo to take a break. I would come out for maybe a couple of weeks and then be there for several months and then come out again for a couple of weeks, et cetera. I remember deep feelings of guilt when I left. I thought it was just me, but now I know it's very common. I don't even think it's post-traumatic stress disorder; it's stress-of-the-moment disorder, when you leave whoever it is behind, in whatever nightmare scenario you've all been in together, and feel guilty for them, for their basic physical safety. You think you're deserting the cause, so to speak. You're deserting colleagues, friends, people, the story.

I've had those feelings and I've pushed the limits of getting people out of the siege of Sarajevo. I did things that I would have been in deep, deep trouble for had it been known at the time. I used every means possible to extract some very vulnerable people from Sarajevo. It wasn't allowed, but I did it along with my team members, and I'm pleased and proud of that.

PLAYBOY: Whom did you extract?

AMANPO UR: I extracted a husband, wife and their kid and made up all sorts of stories as to why they had to be processed through the official lines, get on a military flight, get out, come to the United States, et cetera. I even said the kid worked for a kids' program on CNN. It was only mildly stretching the truth. In any event, I saved their lives, we saved their lives, and I have nothing to apologize for. Again, what's the alternative? Our oath, or mine, is do no harm. I don't feel the necessity not to come home and have a glass of wine and see my friends and family. In fact, I believe that kept me sane and that I could, like many people, have been driven completely mad had I stayed there the entire time with no break. And then what good would I have been? What story would I have told? I would have been totally compromised. One of my proudest accomplishments is that I emerged sane from all these horrendous things I've seen.

PLAYBOY: Were there ever moments when you felt you'd crossed over, that you were at a point where you were mentally unwell?

AMANPO UR: Nope. Never. Certainly not at the time and not since, but I think it's an important question, because there are degrees thereof. Some people are much more affected, some people less. Some people are obviously affected, some people hide it. I think mental health is an issue we absolutely have to talk about. And we are, more and more and more. I credit CNN and all the news organizations that very early on in the Bosnian war and certainly after 9/11 realized they were sending their employees into the worst, most extreme experiences of the human condition, and that it will have an effect.

There's no doubt I've been affected. And I would say that sometimes I'm very stressed, sometimes I'm anxious, sometimes I can maybe talk loudly or whatever. I put it all down to the effects of what I went through. I'm not ashamed. I don't have screaming PTSD, but I certainly have...I don't know. I don't even know how to describe it.

PLAYBOY: A normal human reaction?

AMANPO UR: It's a normal human reaction, but you know what? It's to an abnormal human experience. Not only what happens to us, but to watch what's happening to the people we're covering. It's inhuman what we've had to witness. And that's why I make no apologies for any of us who go and do it. You can be white, you can be rich, you can be poor, you can be any other color. But go and tell the stories and tell them honestly and bring back the information.

PLAYBOY: How did you not burn out?

AMANPO UR: I think because I came back enough, but also I obviously have a huge amount of stamina, mental and physical. I am a very optimistic person. I have faith. I was always in the warm embrace of my family and friends. And that's what I would return to. I would come back to my family and friends and just try to have as normal and as beautiful a life as I could. I would go to museums, go to good films, go to lovely gardens with beautiful plantings. I would gravitate toward beauty, and it was an antidote. I knew early on — even if I didn't know, I knew subconsciously — that I had to come back and do things that would cauterize the wounds.

PLAYBOY: You've been described many times as having nerves of steel, but there must be moments when you're absolutely terrified.

AMANPO UR: Yeah.

PLAYBOY: What were some of those moments when you felt the most frightened, and how did you navigate that?

AMANPO UR: I'd never really been in a war zone before Bosnia. I mean, yes, there was the first Gulf war, but that was much more about big armies facing off against each other. It was much more of a set piece, though it was pretty scary when we were in Iraq under Saddam Hussein's whim. But to be in Bosnia in a medieval siege with indiscriminate shelling of civilians — and we were obviously among the civilians; we didn't have a special journalistic safe haven somewhere — was very scary when I first encountered it. And then you just develop a certain awareness. I always touch wood and say

I'm very lucky. Many of my friends and colleagues were not so lucky. You can't allow those fears and those emotions in the moment to paralyze you. It's only afterward that you realize what you've been through, perhaps the crazy risks you've taken. The whole way through the war, it wasn't that I wasn't afraid; it was that I managed the fear.

PLAYBOY: Are you a person of faith?

AMANPO UR: Yeah

PLAYBOY: Can you tell me more about that?

AMANPO UR: Not really. I mean, it's nothing huge. I was brought up Catholic by my mother, and I went to a Catholic convent. As I said at the beginning, that whole early childhood education formed my human and moral view of the world. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" is the basic golden rule, isn't it, of Christianity? I'm not an extremist. I'm pretty middle-of-the-road in most of my views except when it comes to genocide and climate truths.

PLAYBOY: But you're also a feminist, right?

AMANPO UR: Oh, I'm definitely a feminist, but that's middle-of-the-road.

PLAYBOY: But the church is not exactly middle-of-the-road.

AMANPO UR: No, it's not. So those are issues. When I have interviews with church leaders, for instance, I go very deep into that. I always bring up the issue of women in the Catholic Church

PLAYBOY: Is that a challenge personally? Not to do your job, but to reconcile your faith with some of what the church does?

AMANPO UR: No, no, no. Who I worry about offending is my mother, who watches. But for me, it's an absolute nobrainer. I'm sorry my faith has so much to account for and to atone for, but you know what? All faiths do

PLAYBOY: It sounds like you're in a pretty fabulous professional place right now, but you told British Vogue that you're thinking of putting yourself back out in the field again. "It's time for my third act," you said. In your dream universe, what's the third act?

AMANPO UR: I don't yet know what my third act is. I'm on the cusp certainly in my chronological life. I'm not sure how it's going to manifest. What I do know is that I love being in the field, not necessarily under fire, but doing things like *Sex & Love Around the World*. I really enjoyed that, because even though it had that title, it wasn't about the seedy underbelly of sex that I've done so much on as a reporter — the trafficking, the prostitution, the sex-selective abortions of female fetuses, the rape and all the horrible stuff. This was completely different. This was about love and intimacy and how different societies define it and how they experience it.

PLAYBOY: You mentioned your life as a young single foreign correspondent and the affairs, and that's kind of the movie picture: In between firefights everybody's having great romances and love affairs. How did being a young single woman in that field shape your views on sex and love and relationships?

AMANPO UR: I was free in those years. I was on the road. I didn't have any constraints from family, and I was able to explore my emotional and physical desires. I know it's a cliché: As one male colleague used to say, wheels up, rings off. Now, I wasn't married, so there was no ring to take off, but I met fantastic people who had the same worldview. We were on the front lines together. We believed in the same struggle. We were proud of our work and thought we were doing something that made the world a better place. As I say, you're on the extreme end of human experience in every way, even in your love affairs. It was great. And I'm still friends with a lot of them.

PLAYBOY: You don't have to name names, but any you remember particularly fondly?

AMANPO UR: Very fondly. The person who was my main boyfriend for the longest time. Yeah, very fondly.

PLAYBOY: What did you take away from that relationship?

AMANPO UR: That it wouldn't have lasted because we were both too focused on our careers.

PLAYBOY: In your personal life and now in your reporting on sex and that realm of human experience for your *Sex & Love Around the World* series, what might be informative or useful to, let's say, a typical Playboy reader, who's probably a man? What does he need to know?

AMANPO UR: Okay, that's interesting. I think he needs to know what I discovered reporting the *Sex & Love series*: not only the obvious, consent and all the rest of it, but that a man needs to be sensitive to what makes a woman tick; what it is that satisfies a woman emotionally, physically, sexually. I've noticed from a lot of the interviews I've done around this subject that the couples who feel the most heard are those who talk together the most and express their desires to each other. Communication came across as one of the most significant aspects of what makes relationships successful or not. That's important for men to understand, because I think men traditionally are less communicative. Women have the reputation of always wanting to talk, but we do it because we want to break down barriers — our own barriers, but also the barriers that may be preventing couples from really getting to know each other.

PLAYBOY: Sex can be quite hard to talk about, even in very libertine societies.

AMANPO UR: Yes and no. I was so amazed by how open these girls and women were to me. I mean, when I asked this Afghan woman who was pregnant with her third child—she was probably no more than 20 — I said to her, "Are you happy?" and the translator said, "Are you sure you want me to ask her that question?" She said in that society and in that milieu, it can be a subversive question. And that is perhaps one of the most important takeaways from the entire series for me, because it just summed up everything: There are hundreds of millions of women around the world who don't dare imagine they have a right not just to be happy but to ask for happiness and love and care from their partners. That was an eye-opener to me.

PLAYBOY: The series, to me, was quite unexpected. I'm wondering if you learned anything in your reporting that feels resonant to this period in your life — your "sexy 60s."

AMANPO UR: That's a slogan I made up to make myself feel better. But in many ways there's a freedom that comes with a certain age. I'm really lucky. I'm still gainfully employed, doing something incredibly satisfying on a really important network with a really great audience around the world and around the United States. How much luckier can I get? Seriously — it's not a rhetorical question. I've received a lot, and I hope I've given back a lot. I hope it's going to be sexy 60s. There's a lot out there I don't even know about that I want to explore. And that's what it is: I don't have the answers for the first time. I've just figured it out while you're talking to me. I don't have the answers. I don't know what's out there. And it's a little scary, and it's exciting. I think I'm on my last 30 good years and I want to make them great.

PLAYBOY: What's that going to look like?

AMANPO UR: We'll see. ■

"You need to ask yourself, Does the Clitorizer 3000 still spark joy?"

force of nature

With a new album forthcoming, hip-hop powerhouse Princess Nokia explains why living in multiple dimensions is paramount to her existence on Earth

BY **JHONI JACKSON**

"Every day I feel different. Every day it's either masc or femme or in between. Every day is goth or bohemian," Princess Nokia tells me. "When I wake up and feel an energy, I coexist with it."

The performer, born Destiny Frasqueri, is fluid in more ways than one. "I'm a gender-nonconforming androgynous person," she says. "But some people are like, 'What happened to your tomboy phase?' "

That question is a reference to Frasqueri's breakthrough 2017 single "Tomboy," off the album *1992 Deluxe*. The song's music video sees her on a basketball court in an oversized T-shirt pulled over a sweatshirt. She later raps about her "little titties" and "phat belly." Those who inquire about her lost era of tomboyishness seem not to realize that Frasqueri's presentation will never be absolute and thus defies tidy categorization.

In a culture that encourages us to divide — by religion, economics, race, age, sexuality, the list never ends — the multihyphenate Princess Nokia persona sets out to represent the complexity of women, artists and human beings. She's a lover and a fighter. She's a rapper and a singer. She's masculine and feminine. She's a pragmatist and a dreamer. And no matter the haters, Frasqueri is unstoppable.

"It's so much easier to understand artistic men," Frasqueri remarks. "But women — especially brown women we think they have psychological issues."

It's a given that career-minded women have to work harder to earn respect and dollars. In hip-hop specifically, female upand- comers often have a male sponsor. Lil Wayne ushered Nicki Minaj into the spotlight; Timbaland collaborated with Missy Elliott. Even with a co-signer, the unofficial rule is that urban female entertainers subject themselves to sexualization. Today, rising rappers such as Megan Thee Stallion, City Girls and Saweetie seemingly have to perform as vixen archetypes as well as perform flawless bars.

The number of female rappers signed to major labels has dropped precipitously since the late-1980s and early-1990s heyday, when more than 40 women had major deals at one time. In 2010, three did. To this day, only six female rappers have reached number one on the *Billboard* Hot 100. Those granted stardom are a reflection of mainstream values and ideals, which are often sexist and racist. But celebrity also offers a means of challenging those norms. By acknowledging these truths and refusing to be anybody but her authentic self, Frasqueri is causing a disruption.

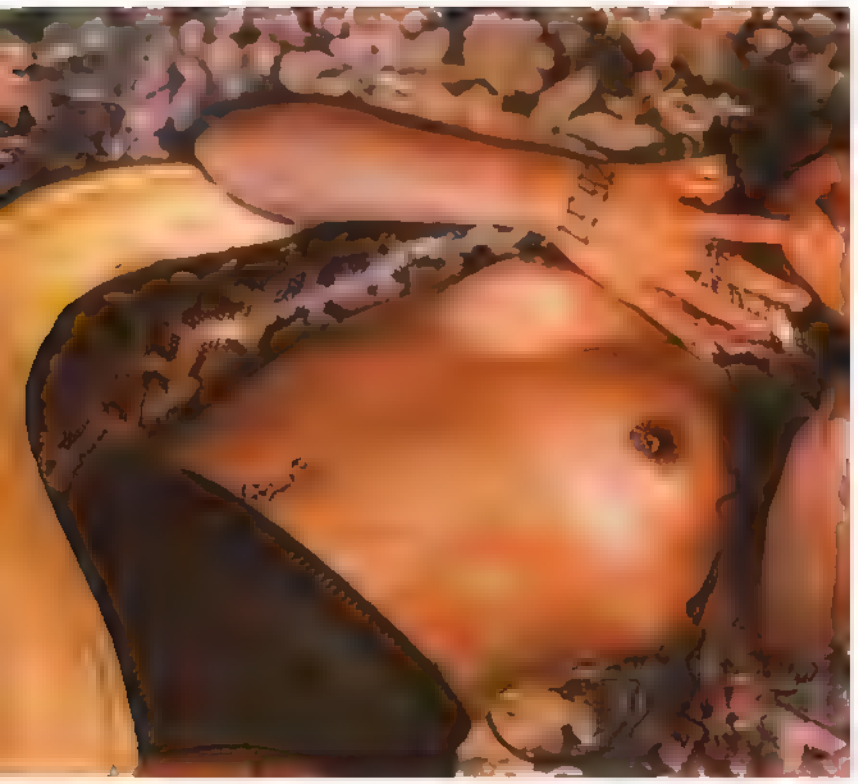
"I love being proud of how studly I am, how boyish and how manly I can appear. I love being androgynous," she says. "I feel beautiful like that. It's just another beautiful side of me."

Beyond "Tomboy," Frasqueri's catalogue feels boundless. On 2014's *Metallic Butterfly*, she explores trip-hop mixed with sci-fi-inspired pop and Afro-Latin beats. The first track, "Dimensia," announces on top of reverberations, "Welcome to *Metallic Butterfly*, where you are now free / On this planet, you are now released of all plague, hate and disease." She suggests young girls seek out respect and describes herself as an anomaly, sliding back and forth between spoken word and chants over bubbly beats. *1992 Deluxe* stars a darker, swaggier Frasqueri who doesn't ask for respect; she demands it. Her power stance widens on "G.O.A.T," on which she rattles with the profound confidence born of being a "weird girl."

Just when the industry assumed Frasqueri would stay on the path of hard anthems, she abandoned bravado on the 2018 mixtape *A Girl Cried Red*, a nod to the post-hardcore-punk-rock subgenre of emo. There, she trades rapping for singing of loneliness and depression.

Her forthcoming album promises to be a layered and stunning work. Untitled at press time, the project will be her first to benefit from having new legal and management representation.

"Sugar Honey Iced Tea (S.H.I.T.)," her newest single, presents a version of



Frasqueri that honors her previous musical tropes by weaving them together. In the track's video, a parody of beauty pageants, jazz horns and gospel vocals erupt as the defiant rapper gazes at her reflection in a dressing-room mirror; a line of competitors zhuzh in the background.

"These bitches don't like me / These bitches wanna fight me / And doing shit just to spite me." When she wins the pageant, she floats down the runway, resembling the Virgin Mary.

"I know I hold my principles and my virtues so deeply that you will never take me from that peacefulness," she says of the video's meaning. "And you can never take that crown away from me."

A long white lace veil and a large crown indeed adorn Frasqueri in that video, and the song's lyrics also revisit tales from her lessthan-perfect past. "I'm on the train throwing soup," she raps, referencing her reaction to a man on New York's L train who had been slinging racial slurs at a group of teenage boys. Frasqueri's soup-throwing made headlines two years ago, and it's a moment she doesn't want us to forget. "I love to throw hands on racists, bigots and scum," she raps. Frasqueri ends the video by passing the crown to a young girl.

"That's who I am in real life. I'm hood, and I'm very involved at the same time, and that gives me a lot of wisdom," she says. "It allows me to love myself and love my people. It allows me to see how conditioned people around me are and not to blame them for their pain. It also makes me strong enough to know that I am not passive, and if it really comes to that, we can take it there. I need to fight for the things that matter."

Frasqueri identifies as a *santera*, a priestess of Santería, her family's practice. Santería is a religion that took root among Afro-Cuban slaves in the Caribbean. Many of its practices are kept secret to avoid persecution, but the faction is known to worship the gods of West Africa, known as orishas, who are seen as nature personified.

Perhaps her worship of Mother Nature is why Frasqueri wanted to embody the four elements in Playboy, complete with snakes and doves. "Snakes are earth, and they ground you and make you feel pure and whole," she says. "I love my body. I know that I embody the four elements in a very profound way, as every woman does, and as every person does."

Frasqueri, born in New York, grew up without the guidance of her own mother. Her childhood had been marked by a loving family with a fondness for hiphop and a beloved goth babysitter who introduced her to heavy metal. Then, when Frasqueri was still a child, her mother died of AIDS. Shortly after, her grandmother died. Frasqueri was then placed in foster care; at the age of 16 she ran away from an abusive foster home in East Harlem

Frasqueri found comfort in New York's queer community. The maestros of the city's LGBTQ nightlife taught her how to entertain while standing up for her fellow outsiders. Today she continues to empathize with the often forgotten, including the 3.4 million people in Puerto Rico struggling to rebuild after Hurricane Maria tore through the island in September 2017. That month, Frasqueri set up an independent disaster-relief fund to aid the territory her family is from. In June 2018, she canceled a performance in Mexico City to focus on relief work. She founded Hood 2 La Gente, a campaign to support communities affected by the natural disaster. Last February, she headlined a show at the University of Puerto Rico's Río Piedras campus. The event was unlike any of her previous productions: Organized by a university queer-activism collective, it opened with an act that spotlighted performers from the city's alternative LGBTQ scene.

"It was something very powerful for me," she says. The show was free; no bouncers surrounded the small stage, and the audience was treated to an impromptu meet-and-greet.

"There's so much racism, homophobia, transphobia and corruption," she says of Puerto Rico, which, as of 2018, has a poverty rate of almost 45 percent. "It was nice that everyone was in a place where

“I've been **called** hurtful things based on who **I am,** on my **spiritualism,** on my astrological planning chart, on my **duality.**"

they didn't have to fear, because they were surrounded by people just like them."

The people in that venue, on that warm evening in the island's capital, likely understood Frasqueri better than many of her peers. In an industry run on the iPhones of agents, managers and publicists, she chooses to work with a small crew and without a record deal

"I always have to fight for my seat at the table, because no one is going to give it to me — and I've accepted that," she says.

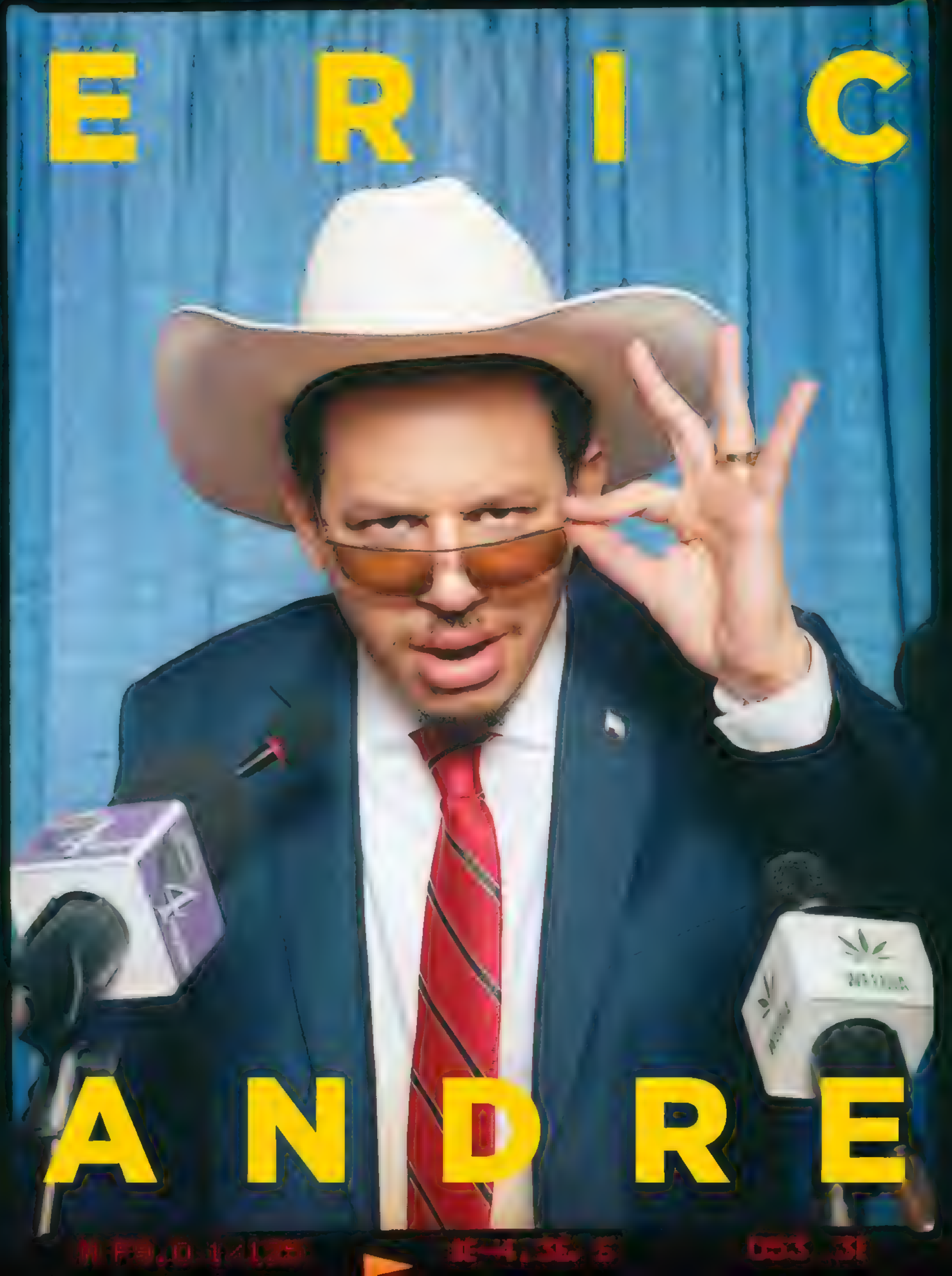
Frasqueri has formidable engagement on social media, with more than 1 million monthly listeners on Spotify and almost 40 million views on YouTube to date. The "Sugar Honey Iced Tea" music video broke 1 million views within a month of its release. At the same time, Frasqueri points out that people have deemed her "crazy," "fake" and a "fraud" because, according to her, she makes people uncomfortable.

"I find that really unfortunate, because I make it so easy. I've made it very easy for people to understand me," she says.

Frasqueri could be perceived as a woman of contradictions: She loves empowering others, but she'll fight if she needs to. She wants to maintain artistic freedom, but she signed a distribution deal. "Gemini," another track from her new album, may be the most concise suggestion of who Princess Nokia is: "Two heads, one eye," she raps, accompanied by swirling instruments.

"In my new album I'm trying to embody how special my sign makes me and how unique it's made my career," she says. "I've been called lots of hurtful things based on who I am, on my spiritualism, on my astrological planning chart, on my duality."

Despite the heartache that comes with feeling misunderstood, Frasqueri's connections to spirituality, nature and the world keep her going. "I make great art, and I make art that inspires others. That's all that matters. The other stuff that comes after, that's up to God, you know?" she says. "When the world needs reminding of my greatness, I'm there to remind them, but I'm not here to whine. I continue." ■


E R I C
A N D R E

FOR PRESIDENT

Introducing the Cool Party: No Policies, Just Attitude

It's about attitude, and it's about time. Eric Andre, host of Adult Swim's *The Eric Andre Show* and star of the prankbased feature film *Bad Trip*, is running for president and, like most of his fellow candidates, investing all his energy in the construction of an attention-grabbing persona. Unlike his rivals — with the exception of our actual president — the Florida- born hopeful is building his image on a platform of blatant falsehoods, below-the-belt insults and dereliction of duty. We caught up with Andre at a salon, where a manicurist buffed fake tanner off his fingernails, and adjourned to his favorite Korean barbecue restaurant. There, he ate eel and pressed the flesh (and discussed his plan to celebrate a "crystal-meth Christmas") with a few starry-eyed constituents. He also gave us a glimpse into the Cool Party campaign, Russian pee-pee tape and all. —*James Rickman*

PLAYBOY: Between Trump and Tom Steyer, we have two billionaires in the running. How's your war chest?
ANDRE: I'm a thousandaire. I've made over $3,000 in my life. I dare you to find the person who's more qualified than me. I'm making over 250 bucks a week.
PLAYBOY: Any campaign-trail highlights so far?
ANDRE: None. I'm avoiding my constituents as much as possible. I've been spending all my time at Jimmy Buffett concerts and drinking Shamrockin' Sangria at Bennigan's.
PLAYBOY: What's the change you want to see in the world?
ANDRE: I don't want to see anything. I'm going to close my eyes and let my constituents do whatever. I want to golf and sleep under my desk as much as possible. I have absolutely

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **MILLICENT HAILES**

no policies. And that's my promise to the American people: I'm just about attitude and swagger.

PLAYBOY: Let's talk about attitude. How do you define it?

ANDRE: Well, *Webster's* dictionary defines attitude as telling people your opponent sucks his own dick at night. I couldn't believe Webster. I was like, "Webster, you old fool! You on one!"

PLAYBOY: You've actually mentioned on the trail that your opponent "sucks his own dick at night." Do you think that's an appropriate thing for a candidate to say, and were you speaking metaphorically?

ANDRE: I think it's more appropriate now than ever. I was speaking metaphorically and literally. Furthermore, I don't know who my opponent is.

PLAYBOY: Who are you considering for your running mate?

ANDRE: Uh, Jussie Smollett, Lil' Bow Wow, John Hinckley Jr. and Papa John.

PLAYBOY: And who's going to be in your Cabinet?

ANDRE: I'm gonna pull up to a McDonald's at three in the morning in an abandoned school bus and just put a bunch of ding dongs onto the fuckin' bus and give them total autonomy.

PLAYBOY: You reported from the Republican and the Democratic conventions in 2016 ——

ANDRE: That's how I got the politics bug

PLAYBOY: Did those experiences inform your decision to run for president?

ANDRE: Yeah. I was like, Politics is easier than comedy. It's like comedy, but you don't have the pressure of telling jokes; you just get up there and complain about shit and dupe people into thinking you're going to do something while a few oligarchs control everything.

PLAYBOY: Where do you stand on legalization?

ANDRE: Legalization? Of everything? I'm all for it. I mean, doesn't matter to me. Whoever gives me the most money to get into office, I'll do whatever they want. I'm going to be pretty drunk on power. And schnapps.

PLAYBOY: What would you legalize first?

ANDRE: OxyContin. [*burps*] Excuse me. That's on the record, by the way. That's going in the anals [sic] of history.

PLAYBOY: What about climate change? [*Andre bursts into laughter*] Is it real, and if so what do you plan to do about it?

ANDRE: Wait till those polar ice caps melt, then surf the gnarliest fuckin' tsunami, dude! Right into the Surf Olympics.

PLAYBOY: What's your relationship with the mainstream media?

ANDRE: I don't own a TV and I can't read. I have no relationship with it.

PLAYBOY: We've seen the rise of social media as a political tool. Do you plan on running your own accounts?

ANDRE: I will at first, but I plan on getting hacked so that when I go on a bigoted diatribe and accidentally retweet my porn searches, I'll have an excuse to fall back on and an intern to scapegoat, Ted Cruz–style. He was favoriting porn Twitter accounts, and then he was like [*grunts*], "Uh, my intern did that!" And he still beat the guy from the Mars Volta.

PLAYBOY: Of course, Senator Cruz isn't the only politician who's had to deal with embarrassing leaked documents. Do you anticipate any problems there?

ANDRE: The only problem is figuring out when to release my sex tape, my Russian hooker pee-pee tape, my masturbation tape and my taking-a-dump-on-my-desk tape. [*A constituent at a nearby table offers Andre a glass of beer*] Oh, no thank you. I'm detoxing. I'm going straightedge for two months. And then it's crystal meth come Christmastime. It'll be a crystal-meth Christmas!

PLAYBOY: Presidents Trump, Clinton and Kennedy, to name a few, have gotten into trouble for alleged affairs. Do you anticipate past infidelities being a problem for you?

ANDRE: I anticipate them being a solution. Tax dollars will be spent on my personal sexual needs — with transients, drifters and freight-train-ridin' hobos with their lunch on a bandanna hanging off the end of a stick.

PLAYBOY: What do you hope to accomplish in your first 100 days as president?

ANDRE: Oh, getting out of work as much as possible. I won't even move to Washington, D.C. I'll just do a Ferris Bueller: buy a mannequin and a cantaloupe, paint my face on it and put it on marionette ropes in the Oval Office. I'll have a recording of Ronald Reagan snoring so people think I'm at my desk.

PLAYBOY: What are your thoughts on God?

ANDRE: Not a damn thing. I worship Satan, I practice the dark arts, and I own a Ouija board.

PLAYBOY: Is the Ouija board going to factor into your decisionmaking as president?

ANDRE: Yeah. If I'm president, I'm going to throw pagan menstrual blood at Stonehenge. That's how I'll pick my winning lottery numbers.

PLAYBOY: What's your message to the children of America?

ANDRE: Don't listen to your parents. They're fuckin' out to get you, man. They're out to kill your buzz, bro.

PLAYBOY: And finally, are you concerned that the demands and exposure that come with the job will affect your family?

ANDRE: I don't know. [pauses] Leave me alone! That'd be great if someone was on the campaign trail and just kept saying, *"Leave me alone!"*

I'M GOING TO BE PRETTY DRUNK ON POWER, AND SCHNAPPS.

NATURE
EXPLORER

Darcy

Photography by **Rocky Batchelor**

Such an absolute honour to have you on Playboy! Tell us about your daily schedule as a model, do you have a routine? Thank you, I am very happy to be put on the cover. Honestly, I'm probably the worst person for routine, I wing everything and always leave things to the last minute, I hate the feeling of being stuck in a hamster wheel.

How do you like to begin your day? I like to start my day with a shower, then get ready for the day, after that ill usually sit and have my morning coffee and check my socials.

What are some of your biggest dreams you hope to achieve? One of my dreams is to grow my dancewear business "Heat it up". Buy a house in the next few years and go back to study more at uni in the medical field as that's my passion.

What helps you decompress and relax? I like to snuggle up in my bed with my cats and watch crime shows, swim in my pool if it's a warm day or hang out with my best friends.

Who has been the most influential person in your life and why? My parents as they have always encouraged me to do whatever me 110%. They encourage me to be my best in whatever it is I chose to do.

How romantic are you? I'm actually not the most romantic person to be honest

What is the most memorable date you've ever had? It was when I took someone back to my home town and we watched the sunset by the water and boats. It was a special place I used to go when I was younger and it was so good I could share how beautiful my home town can be even though it's a small country town

What was the biggest lesson from your worst breakup? Don't force something, if it's meant to be it will be.

Would you rather be loved, respected, or admired? I would rather be respected

Are you a city traveller or nature explorer? I love nature, so definitely a nature explorer

What's on your travel bucket list: , I would love to go visit Egypt as I have an obsession with ancient Egypt and all its history

Where can our readers catch up with you and stay updated with your work? They can find me on my Instagram under officiallydarcy where I post updates on what I'm up to and where I'll be.

IN DRUGS

What would happen if the United States decriminalized drug possession? A veteran drug-policy expert offers some trippy outcomes

BY **JAG DAVIES**

WE TRUST

ARTWORK BY SLIMESUNDAY

The drug policies in this country are preposterous. As long as people who use drugs are treated like criminals, mass criminalization and mass overdose deaths will remain two of the greatest ongoing tragedies in the United States.

Accidental drug overdoses are the leading cause of death for Americans under the age of 50, exceeding fatalities from gun violence, car accidents, homicide and HIV/AIDS. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics, more than 68,000 deadly drug overdoses occurred in the United States in 2018 alone.

At the same time, U.S. law enforcement makes an arrest for drug possession every 25 seconds, adding up to well over 1 million arrests a year. It's the single most common reason for arrest in the country. These arrests do nothing to reduce the use of drugs; in fact, criminalization amplifies safety risks by pushing people who use drugs away from public health services.

What if I told you that decriminalization of all drugs (yes, all drugs) could put an end to that? Under decriminalization, people who are caught using or possessing a small amount of drugs or are found with drug paraphernalia would no longer face criminal penalties, meaning any form of criminal punishment (including arrest, jail and imprisonment) would be abolished.

This idea — to cease to treat drug possession as an unlawful offense — isn't as outlandish as it may seem. According to a poll conducted by the Cato Institute, 55 percent of Americans support decriminalization. The leading governmental, medical, public health and civil rights groups — including the American Civil Liberties Union and the Global Commission on Drug Policy, plus celebrity activists such as Richard Branson — have also supported decriminalization, arguing that drug-policy reformation would revolutionize how the U.S. handles use and addiction.

Decriminalization has proven to be transformative in other nations across the world. Numerous countries, including the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Spain and, most notably, Portugal, have had remarkable success with it.

The Portuguese regime, established by António Salazar in 1932, closed the country off from the rest of the world for 40 years. When the suppressive rule abruptly ended in 1974, in came the drugs the country had barely experienced before. By the 1990s, one in 100 people in Portugal was addicted to heroin, and the country's rate of HIV infection had hit the highest in the European Union. But since 2001, when Portugal became the first country to decriminalize all drugs, the number of people voluntarily entering treatment has increased significantly as rates of addiction and adolescent drug use have fallen. From 2000 to 2015, HIV infections in Portugal plummeted from 104.2 new cases per million to 4.2 cases per million.

Given decriminalization's successful track record, senior levels of government are attempting to pave the way for it in an array of countries, including Canada, Ghana, Ireland, Malaysia, Mexico, Norway and Scotland. Still, only a handful of U.S. policy makers have embraced the idea.

Some progress has been made in reforming the war on drugs in the United States — but mostly by cities and states, not by the federal government. Alaska, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Oklahoma, Oregon and Utah have reduced drug possession from a felony to a misdemeanor. Dozens of cities around the country have instituted pre-arrest diversion programs, such as Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion. "911 Good Samaritan" laws, some of which limit criminalization at the scene of an overdose for witnesses who call for emergency medical assistance, have been adopted in all 50 states.

Progress has also been made toward cannabis legalization in all 50 states, giving hope that once-unthinkable drug reforms can happen with positive results. Since Colorado, Washington, Alaska, Oregon, Washington, D C., California, Massachusetts, Maine, Nevada, Michigan, Illinois and Vermont approved measures to legalize cannabis, states have saved millions and are allocating the dollars earned from cannabis taxes to civil sectors. In Colorado, for instance, $225 million in tax revenue was distributed to the Colorado Department of Education from 2015 to 2018. A study published in the journal Economic Inquiry shows compelling evidence that opioid-overdose deaths in states that have legalized recreational cannabis drop by 20 to 35 percent.

The national debate around cannabis has evolved from whether the remaining states should legalize it to how they should legalize it. But even though a 2018 Rasmussen Reports survey found that only nine percent of likely U.S. voters deem the war on drugs a success — and despite positive case studies ranging from Portugal's decriminalization to cannabis legalization stateside — the Trump administration is making moves to ramp

up the drug war. This marks a shift away from modest Obamaera reforms that slowed the growth of mass incarceration. Trump and his ilk have weaponized the overdose crisis in an attempt to demonize immigrants and people of color — even calling for the death penalty for people who sell drugs.

U.S. voters may soon decide on drug decriminalization for the first time: In September 2019, activists in Oregon filed Petition 2020-044, which will likely come to a vote in November 2020. If passed, it will decriminalize simple possession and refer offenders to a range of voluntary services such as evidence-based treatment, harm-reduction programs and housing services. The savings on law enforcement — as well as the revenue from cannabis taxes — would fund these programs.

Some Democratic presidential candidates, such as Bernie Sanders, include far-reaching drug-policy reforms in their platforms. "We are going to end the international embarrassment of having more people in jail than any other country on earth. Instead of spending $80 billion a year on jails and incarceration, we are going to invest in jobs and education for our young people," Sanders promises on his campaign website. Yet as of press time no 2020 presidential candidate has made a full-throated endorsement of ending arrests for drug possession and implementing Portugal-style decriminalization.

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So what would the United States look like if we stopped treating drug users as criminals? Mass incarceration and mass criminalization — which are major drivers of economic inequality, health disparities and systemic racism — would decrease significantly. The criminalization that targets lower-income communities would slowly wither, affording those affected an opportunity to support themselves and their families.

We would no longer fear years like 2018, when law enforcement arrested about 1.43 million people for possessing small amounts of drugs for personal use. The American Civil Liberties Union and Human Rights Watch could work on releasing the 137,000 people they estimate are behind bars in U.S. prisons and jails on any given day for drug possession — many of them being held pre-trial because they can't afford to post bail. Thousands more currently locked up for failing drug tests as a condition of probation or parole could start working toward their freedom.

Black people, who represent 13 percent of the U.S. population and use drugs at similar rates as other groups, would no longer account for 29 percent of people arrested for drug-law violations and 33 percent of people incarcerated in state prisons for drug possession. Law enforcement would be able to divert resources to serious public safety concerns — such as the 67 percent of reported rapes that went uncleared in 2018 and the thousands of rape kits that went unprocessed.

If mass drug-possession arrests stop in the U.S., the thousands of people currently deported every year for possessing any amount of drugs would no longer fear losing their homes. Permanent residents — many of whom have been in the U.S. for decades and have jobs and families — would no longer live with the anxiety caused by the automatic detention and deportation, often without the possibility of return, for being caught with any amount of any drug

One may hypothesize that fewer drug-possession arrests would mean more crime on the streets, but the Pew Charitable Trusts reported in 2017 that there is "no relationship between drug imprisonment and drug problems," because under decriminalization, people would still be arrested for committing crimes under the influence of drugs. Decriminalization would only mean that police could no longer waste taxpayer dollars arresting people for possession.

Decriminalization also makes it easier to ramp up health and harm-reduction services that are known to drastically reduce addiction, overdose deaths and new hepatitis C and HIV infections. Evidence-based drug treatment could more easily be offered to anyone who wants it. For those who continue to use drugs, services to reduce potential harm —such as screening unregulated drugs for adulterants, community-based naloxone distribution, syringe-access programs, supervised consumption sites and other long-proven approaches — could also be made more widely available

All the pieces are in place for drug decriminalization to take effect in the U.S. Now we just have to demand that our leaders act. To truly end the war on drugs and avoid new public health crises, we need to accept that criminalizing possession offers no solutions or hope for real cultural transformation. ■

ANTIFA

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **CHRISTIE HEMM KLOK**

IN FOCUS

A rare look inside America's antifascist movement—the people, the methods and the struggle to find a clear voice in a deafening world

BY **DONOVAN FARLEY**

When I call Gregory McKelvey and Kathryn Stevens, they're in the midst of an alternately quiet and cacophonous Saturday afternoon typical to young parents. The Portland, Oregon–based pair, interracial and in their late 20s, plan to be married next year. Thankful one of their two babies is asleep, Stevens breast-feeds the other during our interview. Neither parent comes across as a domestic terrorist.

But McKelvey and Stevens are involved with antifa — a decentralized network of leftists representing various belief systems and tactics, united only in their opposition to nationalists and white supremacists — and as such they inhabit the same category as the Unabomber and Timothy McVeigh. Or they would, if senators Ted Cruz and Bill Cassidy had succeeded last summer in designating the movement a domestic terrorist group. (Regarding the senators' efforts, President Trump tweeted, "Major consideration is being given to naming ANTIFA an 'ORGANIZATION OF TERROR.' ")

McKelvey tells me that despite frequent threats to his family, showing up for antifa actions is something he and Stevens feel they must do. "I think it helps people to see a successful family defending antifascists, because those people often can't defend themselves "

Stevens adds, "When it was just Greg and me, it was easier to say, 'Threaten us all you want. I'm not scared of you.' But now, with two babies, it's not okay at all. I haven't hurt anybody, and I have no intention of hurting anyone, so why would you threaten my family? It's solely because of our political beliefs."

Perhaps the problem lies in pinpointing what those beliefs are, how the movement acts on them and whom the movement consists of in the first place.

That confusion has often led to fear and anger, exacerbated by antifascists' use of anonymity as a defense against arrest and doxxing — though doxxing is also one of antifa's tactics. Notwithstanding recent efforts to raise this shroud of secrecy, including non-anonymous interviews with outlets such as *Rolling Stone* (and this one), anonymity has allowed a group of loosely connected activists to be demonized by members of the far right and, increasingly, centrists and moderate Democrats. As we stagger toward the 2020 election, antifa finds itself at a crossroads: Can it succeed, or even survive, without taking up the very tools its opponents have wielded to such ruthless effect?

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I've studied Portland's antifa community since it came to prominence in the wake of the 2016 election, and I've reported on several protests and actions in that time. I can't claim total impartiality, in large part because many of my friends and neighbors are involved in the movement, but I can say I've observed antifa's victories and dysfunctions at close range. It's the movement's unique position in American culture — how it works, how it's perceived and the gaping blind spot between the two — that I've set out to explore.

For this story I interviewed a dozen or so antifa activists, who gave me new insights into the range of their methods, from electoral campaigns to, yes,

street confrontations. Although monitoring far-right groups online is a crucial part of the movement's work, I'm more interested in its public-facing efforts — the attempts to puncture the antifa stereotype, reveal the sprawling community beneath and loudly voice the message uniting them all: Hate requires active and direct confrontation

But learning more about antifa requires a treacherous journey through its internal and external challenges. And you can't get a more potent demonstration of those challenges than a string of events, briefly violent and wholly absurd, that unfolded last summer

On May 1, 2019, writer, Twitter personality and occasional Fox News commentator Andy Ngo was videotaped by an undercover antifascist who had embedded with the far-right organization Patriot Prayer. (A Portland grand jury later used the video to indict several Patriot Prayer members.) In it, Ngo appears to smile while others make plans to attack a Portland cidery known to be an antifa hangout. According to reports, the ensuing incident left a woman with a broken vertebra after a man hit her with a baton. Ngo would then dox the injured woman as she lay in the hospital; she reportedly awoke to a cavalcade of death threats.

For this, plus previous instances of what some consider Islamophobia and misinformation on his social accounts, Ngo became fair game in the minds of some antifascists. (In an op-ed, he pushed back against the allegations of Islamophobia.) On June 29, at a Portland rally organized by Patriot Prayer, he was punched and kicked by antifascists in black clothes and masks, who then stole the stunned writer's GoPro. Overnight, Ngo morphed from a fringe figure to a national sympathy case who received nearly $195,000 from a GoFundMe organized by conservative commentator Michelle Malkin.

If only that were the end of the story

The rally landed at the end of Pride Month, and the antifa group PopMob (short for Popular Mobilization) had organized a massive dance party for queer people and their allies to oppose the Proud Boys and other organizations that had joined in with Patriot Prayer. In a move reminiscent of recent antifascist actions in the U.K., PopMob decided to bring vegan coconut milkshakes. Antifa activists hit Ngo with multiple shakes, and Portland police, acting on a tip, tweeted, "Police have received information that some of the milkshakes thrown today during the demonstration contained quick-drying cement." This tweet, which at press time is still on the department's official Twitter page and has more than 13,000 retweets and 25,000 likes, has yet to be substantiated by a single piece of evidence.

"We definitely weren't advocating throwing them at people," says Effie Baum, a fourth-year graduate student and member of PopMob, "but we weren't naive enough to think it might not happen." Baum, who uses they/them pronouns, laughs tiredly at the suggestion that the shakes contained any sort of hardening agent. They point out, as many have, that PopMob would have been risking the murder of hundreds of people had they laced the drinks. This did not stop Fox News from reporting that "the so-called 'milkshakes' reportedly contained quick-drying cement, pepper spray and raw eggs." The attention resulted in Baum receiving hundreds of violent threats from around the country.

It's no surprise that the Ngo incident played well with the Fox audience, but CNN's Jake Tapper took it upon himself to retweet a video of Ngo post-punch with the caption "Antifa regularly attacks journalists; it's reprehensible." (The "attacks" he posted included an egg being tossed, a camera cord being cut and University of Virginia students yelling at a journalist.) Tapper's colleague John Berman invited Ngo on his show. Neither anchor brought up Ngo's history of posting false or misleading statements on his Twitter account.

So—an attempt at peaceful protest was compromised by a moment of violence at

the hands of ostensible allies; that violence was pounced on by the opposition and swiftly turned into a narrative that was amplified by law enforcement and major media outlets.

The antifascists involved didn't have the media apparatus in place to combat the disinformation (though Baum tried), and a major opportunity to correct the record — to proclaim that antifa is not a pack of extremist hooligans — was lost in a fog of tweets and sound bites.

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The antifascist activists I interviewed for this piece are eager to change the perception of the movement and spoke with me knowing they would receive torrents of threats for doing so. The vast majority of antifascist work consists, they tell me, not of black masks, street clashes and weaponized milkshakes but of behind-the-scenes organizing and countless hours spent observing far-right communication channels

People who do antifascist work are not, by and large, participants in the so-called black bloc, whose masks and sometimes aggressive presence at rallies are a magnet for media attention Antifascists are doctors, parents and baristas They're your neighbors. There are so many grandmothers involved in antifascist actions in Portland alone that they have their own organization, complete with monthly meetings and a Facebook page. At the Occupy ICE PDX protests last June, directly in front of federal agents dressed in riot gear and holding rifles sat a row of grannies. One of them was knitting.

So why has antifascism become demonized by the right and shunned by the left? Much of the answer lies in the movement's anonymity and disdain for figureheads. Groups like Patriot Prayer and the Proud Boys, along with their admirers in the media and Washington, D.C., have cultivated a stable of big personalities and a knack for messaging that has served them well under President Trump, allowing them to shape their own narrative and that of antifascism. In the social-media age, when information (and misinformation) travels the world in the blink of an eye, the messaging effort is often as important as the message itself. It's not enough to be on the right side of history; you have to be on the right side of those reading and writing

"Going out in the streets is only about 10 percent of what we do."

that history. While the far right has flourished, antifascists have painted themselves into a lonely corner by shunning the press and the centrist public.

Lucky for them, the press isn't the only tool at their disposal.

"I feel a responsibility to change the public discourse around antifascism, absolutely," says Sarah Iannarone, a 2020 candidate for mayor of Portland. (Her campaign is helmed by McKelvey.) Iannarone is a mother who has spent her professional life trying to make urban spaces greener and more livable, often traveling the world to discuss policy. She's aware that her open support of antifascism will mark her for threats and violence and possibly cost her political capital — but she feels duty-bound to the cause.

"Our society's lack of awareness and understanding of the issue is extremely disappointing to me," she says. "Because this problem exists within the system, it's important we use radical tactics — though I definitely think electoral politics matter, and that's why I'm running."

Iannarone's belief that antifascism should engage with mainstream politics is shared by many of the activists I interviewed; it's one of the reasons they spoke openly with me. These attitudes represent a shift in tactics within a movement that has traditionally been suspicious of the electoral process. Along with a nascent openness to the press, this approach could go a long way toward correcting the rampant misinformation against them.

PopMob's Baum represents a more counterintuitive strain of the "radical tactics" Iannarone mentioned. Over the past year, PopMob and its allies have sought to combat both the far right's endeavors and antifa's messaging problems through resistance theatrics, using marching bands to drown out loudspeakers and recently launching the "Banana Bloc," wherein roughly 40 activists dressed in banana suits and armed with brass instruments led a parade of about 100 people to protest a Proud Boys rally.

Baum points to community building and organizing as PopMob's central aim. In March 2019, after a series of attacks befell Portland's LGBTQ community, PopMob rapidly put together an event attended by about 600 people, featuring self-defense and community-awareness lessons. The organizers handed out more than 1,000 whistles, flashlights and self-defense key chains.

"I volunteered because I wanted to change attitudes," Baum says. "Going out in the streets is only about 10 percent of what we do."

“

The people who are open about their involvement need to **change their rhetoric,** because right now we are bringing a **knife to a gunfight.”**

Opening page: Margaret "Peggy" Zebroski **Previous spread:** Gregory McKelvey and Kathryn Stevens **This page, clockwise from left:** Jacob Bureros, Effie Baum and Olivia Katbi Smith.

This page: An activist using black-bloc tactics charges through a 2019 May Day rally in Paris **Opposite page:** Portland rally in August 2019, demonstrates its take on antifascist activism

Jacob Bureros, an activist whose participation in rallies and press ops subjects him to constant death threats, points to rarely covered community-minded work such as the aid provided to Portland's most vulnerable residents during a brutal ice storm in January 2017 Activists delivered blankets and hot meals to the city's homeless and offered transportation to shelters. After a rash of violent attacks against the homeless in 2018, antifascists set up patrols of the various homeless camps around town

And then there's Margaret "Peggy" Zebroski, a 69-year-old retired physician's assistant and grandmother. In February 2017, Zebroski participated in a protest against the killing of Quanice Hayes, a 17-year-old African American who was fatally shot by a white Portland cop with an AR-15 after Hayes had allegedly used a toy airsoft gun in a robbery. At the protest, a Portland police officer — in full riot gear, despite there being only about 50 protesters pinned Zebroski's head to the pavement with his knee, breaking her nose.

"Well, I have to tell you that for me, in the context of things, this was a pretty trivial event," Zebroski tells me. "I've been doing demonstrations since I was a teenager. I've been clubbed in the head in San Francisco during Vietnam protests. It's the police harming the elderly, and that's upsetting I get that. But we were protesting Quanice Hayes being killed He died; I only had my nose broken."

• • •

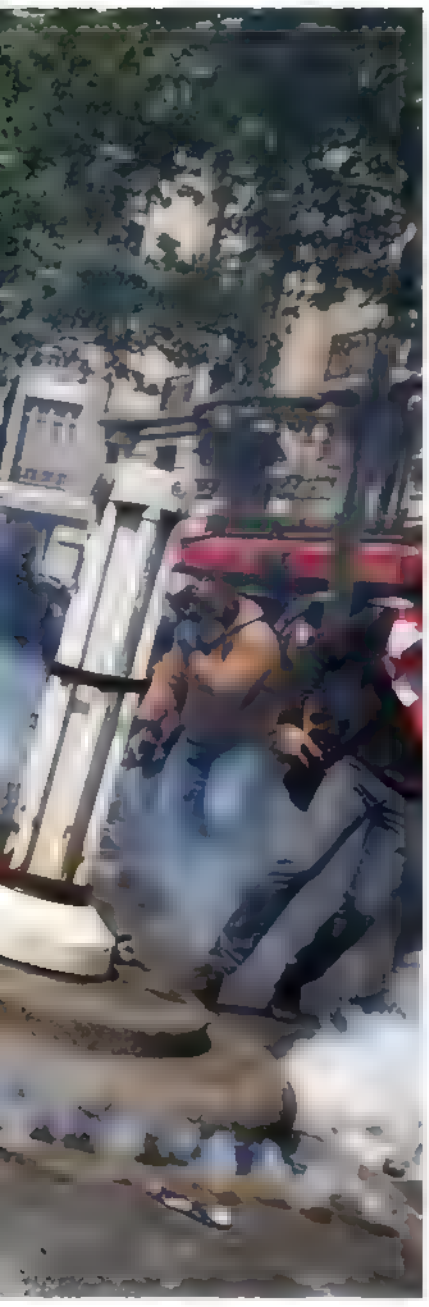
Even in the face of such ardent civil disobedience, the question of physical confrontation remains. If antifascism really favors vigilance and community building over fists, why do some of its adherents give the far right what it wants by meeting its violence with more violence? Because for better or worse, sometimes it works out in the left's favor

David (not his real name) is a family man in his mid-30s and a member of Rose City Antifa, one of America's oldest antifascist groups. He cites Richard Spencer, the white nationalist whose fame peaked after he was punched in the face with cameras running. Spencer's assertion that the black bloc has made his allies afraid to show up to events suggests that violently confronting the far right can be an effective tactic. "If they can't find a protester in black bloc to fight," David explains, "they're going to go beat up an African American teen at a mall who is not involved in a protest whatsoever. They're going to attack somebody just walking down the street."

But the threat of violence goes beyond civilians on the far edges of the political spectrum. And for Bureros, a man of Filipino descent and a young father of two, the real danger doesn't come from the bigots in the streets.

"For all the threats I get, I'm still more afraid of the police state and what it can do," he says. "When you have police who can do whatever they want to you with impunity, that's a lot scarier."

An editorial in a 2017 issue of *Pax Centurion*, the official publication of the



Boston Police Patrolmen's Association, informed readers that, when dealing with antifascists, "the only way to defeat these savages is to fight fire with fire." The piece went on to equate antifascism with Nazism.

"The problem, of course, is with that blanket statement," says Norm Stamper, Seattle's police chief during the 1999 World Trade Organization protests, which helped give rise to Occupy Wall Street and much of the modern protest movement. (Stamper has repeatedly voiced his regrets at the heavy-handedness with which his department responded to the massive protest.) "It's just plain wrong, and it's dangerous and ridiculous to think that way.

"Law enforcement has a responsibility to protect everyone at a protest — or a counterprotest — no matter what they're saying or what they believe," he adds. "It's extremely difficult at times, but that's the job we signed up for."

Of the domestic-terrorist designation and its ties to policing, he says, "There is a fascist thread working its way through the body politic, and its head cheerleader is Donald Trump. His diehard followers would absolutely use such a designation to force law enforcement to help further their political cause, which is antithetical to what law enforcement is ostensibly all about."

Of course, quasi-fascism and *Pax Centurion* don't begin to speak for all law enforcement, and the rare instances of antifa affiliates hurling various projectiles their way are further steps away from antifa's core message. (The antifa slogan "All cops are bastards"—or ACAB—while not equivalent to *Pax Centurion*'s claims, isn't helping either.) Activists say their anger arises with good reason and that they're often left to fend for themselves when attacked. In Portland, instances of overzealous policing include shooting nonlethal rounds into crowds of peaceful protesters, resulting in devastating head injuries; charging groups of black bloc antifascists, regular citizens and journalists alike (myself included); striking civilians with batons while driving them toward downtown traffic; and disproportionately arresting leftist protesters.

Which brings us back to black bloc — a small and often messy faction but an integral one. In January 2019, Patriot Prayer attempted to storm a Democratic Socialists of America meeting at Portland's Industrial Workers of the World union office. Portland DSA co-chair Olivia Katbi Smith wasn't there that night, but she's been present for many similar Patriot Prayer–led incursions.

"It's incredibly frustrating when they do things like try to invade our meetings," Katbi Smith says. Reflecting on black bloc's greater significance, she adds, "People still wonder why we need the black bloc out there. That's exactly why. They put their bodies on the line for us."

• • •

When I ask McKelvey about the future of the movement, he replies without hesitation.

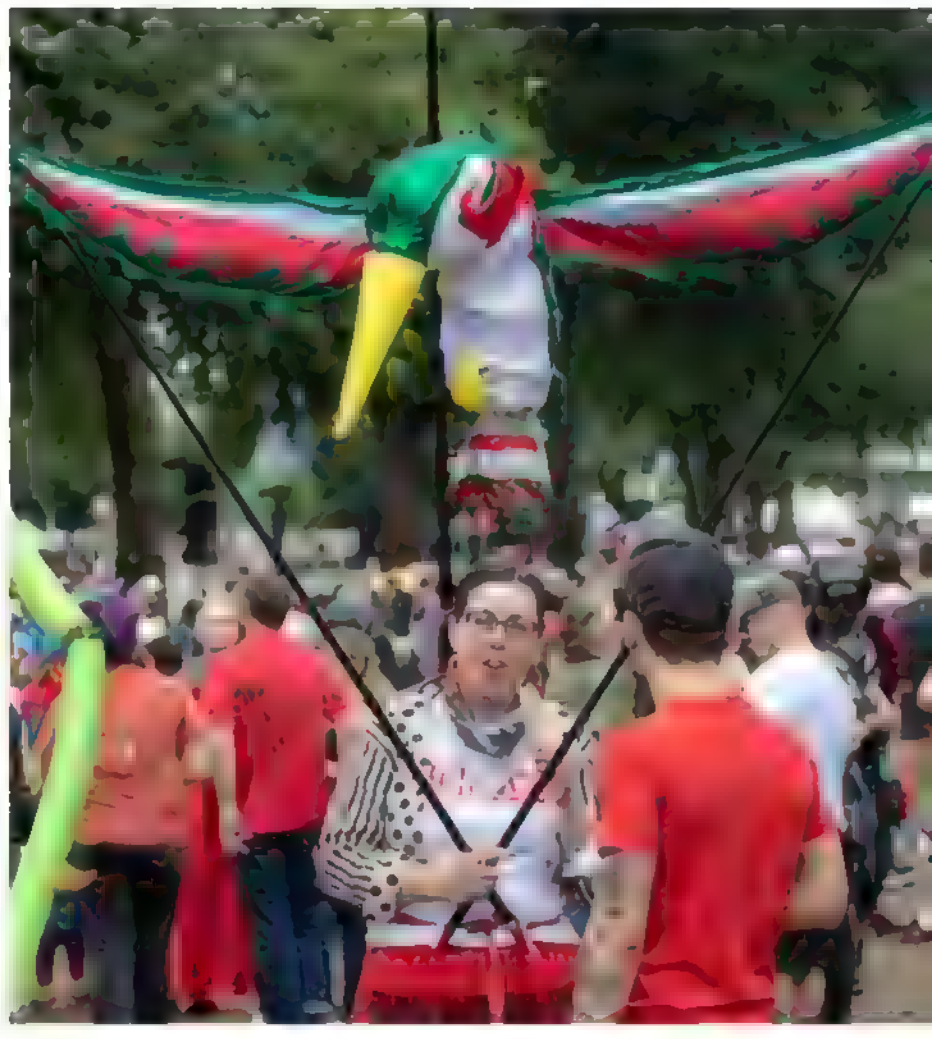
"Antifascism sure as hell has a PR problem," he says.

He goes on, and his words suggest an outline of how the movement might finally find a voice to meet that of the roaring far right: "These elements that Trump has inspired to come out of the woodwork aren't going anywhere regardless of what happens next year, so antifascists aren't either. We need to make it okay for people to say they support antifascism, including people in all levels of government. We're going to need people in the streets forever, but the people who are open about their involvement need to change their rhetoric, because right now we're bringing a knife to a gunfight."

Even if antifa coheres into a force strong enough to shift American culture away from the fears and hatred that continue to work their way into the mainstream, I can't help but think about the effect all that visibility could have on McKelvey and Stevens's family.

"Even with the kids?" I ask.

"Our kids," says Stevens, "are one of the reasons we're out there." ■



HOT TAKE....
MELISA
GUN
Instagram @drmelisa

Happy to have you on Playboy South Africa! Any exciting projects lined up this year? Thank you for having me! Oh yes, I do have some projects lined up, but the one that is the dearest and most important to me is Ms World 2023. I have spent a long-time taking part in various pageants and beauty contests and winning the titles, and I have come up with the idea of organizing my own pageant, but it is going to be unlike anything that America has seen so far. It is my passion project and I love it with all my heart, and I am dedicating all my time to it right now. It will take place in Las Vegas in May this year and we will give a chance to the most beautiful and successful women to tell the world about themselves and their brands, to represent their countries and make them proud, and to show everyone that it is women – caring, tender, gorgeous, intelligent – who should be at the top of the world. So, our pageant will give them this chance, and I am so looking forward to getting to meet them all and let them shine in all their glory.

Best place you have ever been to in the world? It is never an easy choice, is it? I would say that it is Norway for me; it is the most magnificent place I have ever been to. I love the combination of tranquillity of its fjords with the buzz of its cities. I try to return there whenever I can, it helps me restore my energy and I think it is just one of the most stunning places, and it does not matter if you go to Oslo for its busy city life, history and culture, or escape somewhere in the countryside where you can just relax and immerse yourself into nature.

What are some of the biggest dreams you hope to achieve? I want to be useful. I want to be able to help people, to take part in charity activities. I suppose I would like to support and help as many people as I can and I want those people to become family, who would then help each other and those who need it. That would definitely make me fulfilled and grant me a sense of dreams coming true.

What helps you decompress and relax? Spending time with my family. I adore them and whenever I get a chance, I hang out with my mum, sister, and son. They are my best friends and I know that I can rely on them, and they will support me in my endeavors. I also like giving myself some time off, which I spend just lounging around doing nothing for a bit. It helps me restore my strength and get back to work feeling rejuvenated. Oh, and of course traveling – I love discovering new places and revisiting the old favorites. My schedule gets crazy sometimes, but I believe that having this time off is essential.

How romantic are you? Oh, I am very romantic and I love presents and surprises and I love being spoilt because I know that I deserve it. I enjoy knowing that a man can go to great lengths to show that he cares about me and that he values me. I love being a queen and I love men who know how to treat a queen and make all my wishes come true, even if it means taking risks and making a lot of effort. All that shows that a man is serious about me.

What is the most memorable date that you've ever had? Once I was invited by someone to a big yacht for dinner. It was in Istanbul, and we were enjoying the evening, having a nice meal and sailing. There were a lot of flowers that I adore and a violin playing just for me. And then I saw that he'd written my name on a bridge as well as that he really liked me. For me, it was the ultimate romantic evening: a wonderful setting, a lovely dinner, and a surprise that showed that he cared a lot and wanted to see me happy. I do not think I can ever forget that I absolutely loved that night.

What makes you the ultimate partner to have? I know what I want, and I know how to achieve what I want. Hard-working as I am, I know that if you are with someone, your time should be dedicated to that person. That is why when I am in a relationship, I make it my priority to love and be loved by my partner, to create the best life for us together, to share our dreams and passions, to make him proud.

Would you rather be loved, respected or admired? I do believe that I should have all three. I am the kind of girl who deserves the best and should be treated as a queen; therefore, I would rather be loved, respected and admired. If a person can give me all three, then it shows that they truly understand me and know me. Love, respect and admiration to me are like sun, water and fresh air to a flower – they help me blossom and give me energy.

Are you a city traveler or nature explorer? Both! I love making the most of what life has to offer. I equally enjoy exploring new cities, big and small, discovering their secrets and savoring

HE RIT AGE

ANNIE MARIE FOX

Diamond Days

Previous page: *The first Playboy Club opened in Chicago in 1960, introducing to the world the boldness of the Bunny.* ***This page:*** *Budapest-born Marika Lukacs at the Chicago club.* ***Opposite page:*** *Announcing the musical entertainment at the Detroit club, which opened in December 1963.*

To celebrate the 60th anniversary of the iconic Playboy Bunny, we asked more than a dozen Bunnies—and one Rabbit—to take a hop with us down memory lane

On February 29, 1960 the first Playboy Club opened its doors, and into pop culture bounded the Bunny. With her satin ears, sheer stockings, boned corset and white tail (the cuffs and collars came later), she has resided in our collective imagination ever since. Like the indelible Playboy Rabbit Head, the Bunny symbolizes the ideal of sophisticated pleasure. But unlike the inanimate logo, the Bunnies had the hard work of actually bringing that ideal to life.

It was a good job — if you could get it. Hundreds of Bunny hopefuls typically applied at each new club, some company-owned and others franchise-operated. Bunnies could be found working in 25 states and seven countries and, after Playboy's private DC-9 airplane took off in the early 1970s, in the sky as well. From Jamaica to New Jersey, London to Lansing and Omaha to Osaka, the Playboy hotels, casinos and resorts offered endless amenities and activities — horseback riding, scuba diving, skeet shooting, skiing, roulette. The bushy-tailed Bunny was the ever-present standard bearer (and still is: Visit our Playboy Club in London).

Bunny training was rigorous, and standards were high. The so-called Bunny Mothers were managers who enforced rules laid out in the intimidatingly thick Bunny Manual, but for the Bunnies, tips and other perks including tuition assistance and appearance fees made the difficult job worthwhile. In the early 1980s, for example, Bunnies hired to appear at events approved by Playboy earned $17.50 an hour — more than five times the minimum wage.

The clubs were showplaces for comedians, jazz musicians and other performers, but it was the Bunnies, with their practicedto-perfection perch, stance and dip, who were the steady draw. For a short while in the mid-1980s, Rabbits — male servers who were Bunny counterparts — had their time in the New York hutch; more than 1,500 men applied for 25 positions.

It would be a mistake to look at the Bunny and see only a waitress; she was so much more. When the Bunny first arrived on the scene 60 years ago, the world was still adjusting to the idea of women who unapologetically owned their attractiveness or leveraged it as part of their job. Criticism came from various corners, including undercover Bunny Gloria Steinem's two-part 1963 story in Show magazine. But where some saw sexism, most Bunnies saw opportunity. (As one told The New York Times in 1976, "We're exploiting men; they're not exploiting us. After all, those poor slobs just want to come in here and see us.") Many former Bunnies credit their time working at the clubs as formative to the women they became.

"I really owe my Ph.D. — my first one — to Hugh Hefner and Playboy," says Elisabeth Clark, a psychologist and psychoanalyst who was known in the original New York club as Bunny Dana. "Playboy paid for two college courses every semester. My graduate-level classes at New York University were in the daytime, and I could still work at night. It was perfect."

Then as now, it took guts and grit to be a Bunny.

On the occasion of the Bunny's diamond anniversary, we reached out to 17 former Bunnies and one Rabbit — among their ranks a doctor, two rock singers, a film editor, an attorney and a social worker — and asked them about their time wearing the ears. Read on for their memories.

BUILDING CHARACTER— AND BANK ACCOUNTS

Offering excellent pay, flexible hours and tuition aid, working as a Bunny was often seen as the best gig in town

Gloria Hendry, New York club, 1965–1972 *(actor, singer, model, legal secretary)*: I became a Bunny because of the money. Sometimes I made up to $2,000 a week. I was dabbling in acting, and I could never have afforded classes if I hadn't been a Bunny. Thanks to the hours, I was able to go out on auditions, and I got my first Screen Actors Guild movie role, in *For Love of Ivy*, with Sidney Poitier and Abbey Lincoln.

Sabrina Scharf Schiller, New York and Bahamas clubs, 1962–1963 *(attorney)*: I thought if I worked very hard and saved diligently, it would give me the serious start I needed for my education. And that's exactly what happened. I

There was a total shift in social mores, and Bunnies were on the front lines of that change.

worked the first 60 days for the club without a day off, in three inch heels, often doing double shifts. With tips, I was taking home the unheard-of amount of $100 per day. Mid-level career men weren't earning that much then, let alone young women.

Marilyn Cole, London club, 1971–1974 *(journalist, 1973 Playmate of the Year)*: Playboy made us financially independent, a rare thing for 21-year-old girls. We could travel, buy our own cocktails and the latest fashions — even have mortgages and build our own lives. That was powerful.

Kathryn Leigh Scott, New York club, 1963–1966 *(actor, author — we're partial to her 1998 book, The Bunny Years)*: I was a scholarship student at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, working at Bloomingdale's part time, when I saw the ad: "Girls, step into the spotlight, become a Playboy Bunny!" It sounded like fun, glamor, good pay and perfect hours for my class schedule. Lauren Hutton and I met in the long line to audition, and Keith Hefner hired both of us.

Debbie Harry, New York club, 1968 *(lead singer and songwriter for Blondie)*: It's not a job or career choice for everyone; however, it was a good education for me, and the Playboy clubs always had a high regard for the women who worked there. Being a Bunny was the right decision for me, as I have always liked the naughty and nice sides of a story.

AT THE VANGUARD

As the sexual revolution got under way in the 1960s, influenced in no small part by playboy, other social changes were transforming the cultural landscape

Sabrina Scharf Schiller: Women's lives were changing drastically. The advent of the pill brought about more control over our bodies and our choices. There was a total shift in social mores, and Bunnies were on the front lines of that change. We were the innocent representation of the concept that sex is fun. Only the appearance was naughty.

Angelyn Chester, Chicago club, 1972–1984 *(journalist, 1974 International Bunny of the Year)*: The very first woman who won International Bunny of the Year, Gina Byrams, was a woman of color. You have to remember the times; race relations were strained. In 1974 I won my local Bunny competition, and some people said, "Just go to L.A. and have a good time. They're not going to pick a woman of color after another woman of color." I didn't believe that. I thought I had just as good a chance as anybody. And I went on to win.

Jennifer Jackson, Chicago club, 1964 *(social worker, March 1965 Playmate)*: The 1960s were an amazing period, you know? The Black Movement, Vietnam, the hippies, the Beatles, Motown. There hasn't been a more exciting time since.

Francesca Emerson, New York and Los Angeles clubs, 1963–1968 *(film editor)*: The Playboy Club was known for hiring minorities even in the early 1960s, when some places were still segregated. I was a black unmarried mother living in New York City, and Playboy gave me confidence, independence, financial security, adventure and opportunities that would never have come to me had I still been working the counters at Bloomingdale's or serving coffee and donuts in some uptown takeout joint.

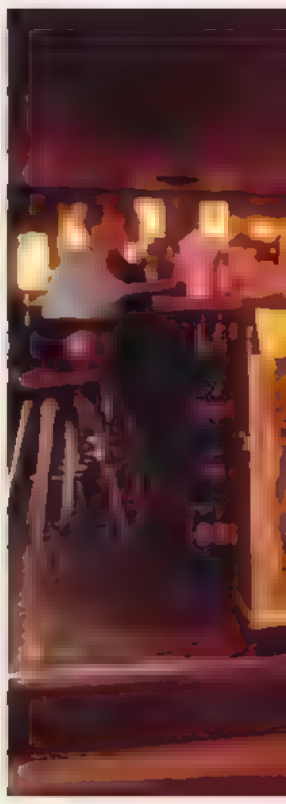
Gloria Hendry: The club was wonderful. If somebody grabbed my tail or said something derogatory to me, like "I don't want that black Bunny waiting on me," the room director would walk over and say, "May I have your Playboy key, please? Now get out and never come back." What can I say? They protected us, they took care of us, and that's my experience.

GETTING THE GIG

Every Bunny — or Rabbit — forged their own path to the Playboy Club

Gwen Wong Wayne, Los Angeles club and Big Bunny airplane, 1965–1975 *(interior designer, April 1967 Playmate)*: My aunt was a Bunny in Miami and New York, and she had some great stories to tell; I think she was the catalyst for my career with Playboy. I showed some pictures to Keith Hefner, and he immediately asked if I could work at the Miami club. I couldn't leave my two children, but Keith promised that when the L.A. club opened I would be one of the first to get a Bunny suit. When the club was interviewing hundreds of girls, I thought Keith had probably forgotten me. He had not. He was a man of his word, and I was in — yeah! Later I became a Jet Bunny on Playboy's plane.

Connie Mason Kasten, Miami and Chicago clubs, 1961–1962 *(actor, June 1963 Playmate)*:



Right: *Jet Bunnies take time off from their flight attendant duties on the Big Bunny to enjoy the sights in Venice, Italy in 1970* ***Below:*** *Front Desk Bunnies at the Detroit club update the welcome board.*

It was a much coveted job, like being chosen to be in the Miss America pageant. Tony Roma had suggested to my dad that I apply since the Bunnies made such good tips. During my Bunny-hopping years I gained tremendous self-confidence, and I was able to support my two little ones as a single mother.

Jeff Rector, New York Empire Club, 1985–1986 *(actor, writer):* When word went out that Playboy was looking for waiters, every Chippendale thought he would get the job. But Playboy didn't want a bunch of beefcakes who just strolled around looking pretty. You had to do your job and do it well. It's the only job I've ever had where I couldn't wait to go to work.

Dale Bozzio, Boston club, 1973–1976 *(musician, lead singer for Missing Persons):* I was 18 years old when I became a Playboy Bunny in Boston. Out of 250 girls, they hired four, and I was one of them. Training lasted weeks. I learned how to use my beauty in a kind, precious manner. I became the best Bunny I possibly could.

BARRACUDAS AND TOUGH MOTHERS

The Bunny gig came with some exacting standards (sometimes too exacting) and demanding tasks

Angelyn Chester: It was not a hairnet type of job. We had weeks of grueling training. You had to learn how to high-carry a tray with two heavy telephone books and how to carry the tray at your waist. You had to be strong to high-carry, to walk in those heels, to serve. And you had to be fast. Once I got my tray, it was like a badge of honor. You got your tray, your flashlight and your name tag. It was like a flight attendant getting her wings.

Pat Lacey, Los Angeles and Jamaica clubs and Big Bunny, 1965–1978 *(Playboy Promotions specialist, writer):* We did a weigh-in every month; you had to stay within five pounds of your original weight. Being a Bunny was a workout: You developed strong arms from all the lifting and Bunny-dipping. The night manager called us experienced Bunnies barracudas because you had to be tough to make it. When I was a Bunny Mother and we needed five girls, we'd get 10 to start. Not all of them would make it. Girls would get demerits for lateness, for shoes that weren't polished. But they were smart and knew how to get by my inspections.

Sabrina Scharf Schiller: I did not like the weekly weigh-in to ensure a trim Bunny figure was kept under control. Those costumes were tight, and we knew when we'd had one dessert too many

IN THE WARREN

Myriad positions were available at the clubs: Door Bunnies, Floor Bunnies, Pool Bunnies, Cabaret Bunnies and more

Sharron Long, Kansas City and Jamaica clubs, 1966–1968 *(businesswoman):* I took over the pool table shortly after starting. It was perfect for me. I loved it, and it taught me a lot about being an entrepreneur, though I wasn't aware of it at the time. I learned how to take chances, how to trust my judgment and, most important, how to step out of the mold that had been created for women at that time.

Joyce Nizzari, Chicago, Miami and New Orleans clubs, 1960 *(Playboy Mansion executive assistant, December 1958 Playmate):* I worked at the original Chicago club during the first week it opened as a Door Bunny, checking key numbers. I wore the Bunny

Our Strong Suit

Recognized the world over, the Bunny costume may be the most famous uniform ever created

Like many aspects of Playboy history, the Bunny suit owes much of its success to women—and not just those who wear it.

Founder Hugh Hefner originally wanted silky negligees as the club uniform but was talked out of the impractical idea by Victor Lownes, the promotions manager who was instrumental in the development of the clubs. Instead Lownes brought Hef a better idea—one Lownes got from his girlfriend, actress Ilsa Taurins (whose name is spelled variously as Ilze and Ilse). As former Bunny Kathryn Leigh Scott reports in *The Bunny Years*, Taurins suggested the costume be rabbit-based, a play on the magazine's emblem. Although Hefner had already considered and spurned the idea as too masculine, Taurins created a one-piece design with an attached tail and separate ears, according to Scott. Taurins's seamstress mother then assembled the prototype, which Lownes showed to Hef. The costume wasn't quite daring enough for Hefner's vision, but with minor alterations it formed the basis for the world-famous outfit that debuted at the Chicago Playboy Club in 1960.

Quality of craftsmanship in addition to the risk-taking fashion surely also helped the costume's legacy. According to New York University director of costume studies Nancy Deihl, the clubs commissioned talented women to custom-build the suits, including Zelda Wynn Valdes, who fabricated them for the New York club that opened in December 1962.

The Bunny costume has withstood the test of time because of its simplicity," says Kristi Beck, a Playboy

costume with no collar or cuffs because they hadn't been added to the uniform yet. The lines to get in were so long that the doors were almost never fully closed; I remember getting snow on my costume.

Gloria Hendry: I wound up starting as a Cigarette Bunny, saying, "Cigars, cigarettes, Tiparillos, Playboy lighters? One dollar and five cents." I'll never forget those lines. And men used to come by and give me a $100 or $50 tip.

Pat Lacey: After six weeks of training in Indiana in an enormous hangar, and in Florida for water-evacuation training, and in Wisconsin at the Lake Geneva club, where the Playboy chef taught us how to prepare gourmet meals, I became a Jet Bunny. Normally a flight would have just one preflight FAA inspector. But on the *Big Bunny* there were always multiple inspectors — they wanted to see Hef's plane and the Jet Bunnies!

Carol Cleveland, London club, 1966 *(comedian, writer and Monty Python cast member):* I started off in the Cabaret Room. Once I took people's orders and the show started, I could watch the cabaret. Dave Allen was a well-known comedian here in England, and he was the star when I first started. I was a great fan and happy as could be watching him perform every night.

LIFE LESSONS FROM THE DRESSING ROOM

Co-workers became friends who became family within the special society of Bunnydom

Marilyn Cole: The Bunny room was the most liberating place — there was swearing, nudity, camaraderie and pluralism. I learned about politics, social justice and religious diversity. A Bunny roommate had been born in Aden as a Zoroastrian; she called it the oldest religion in the world. She would burn incense and pray every night, even wear a religious garment around her waist underneath her Bunny costume.

Kathryn Leigh Scott: I was a farm kid from the Midwest mixing with 110 other young women in every size and shape, from every religious, ethnic, cultural, economic and racial background, from all over the world. The Bunny dressing room circa 1963 was more diverse than a college campus even 20 years later. A single mother from a Harlem project donned the same jewel-colored costume as an heiress, an East German refugee who'd escaped the Berlin Wall, the daughter of a Chinese diplomat, a gap-toothed tomboy who became a supermodel; I interviewed them all for *The Bunny Years*.

Candace Collins Jordan, St. Louis and Chicagoclubs,1973–1977 *(columnist,December*

Opposite page, top left and right: *Each Bunny's garment is custom-fit to her needs by an experienced seamstress* ***Opposite page, lower left:*** *Scottie Scott of the New Orleans club works as a Pool Bunny.* ***Below:*** *Cynthia Maddox models an early collarless, cuffless version of the Bunny suit (architectural model of the Chicago club in the background)*

senior manager and part of a group responsible for overseeing Bunny selection and training.

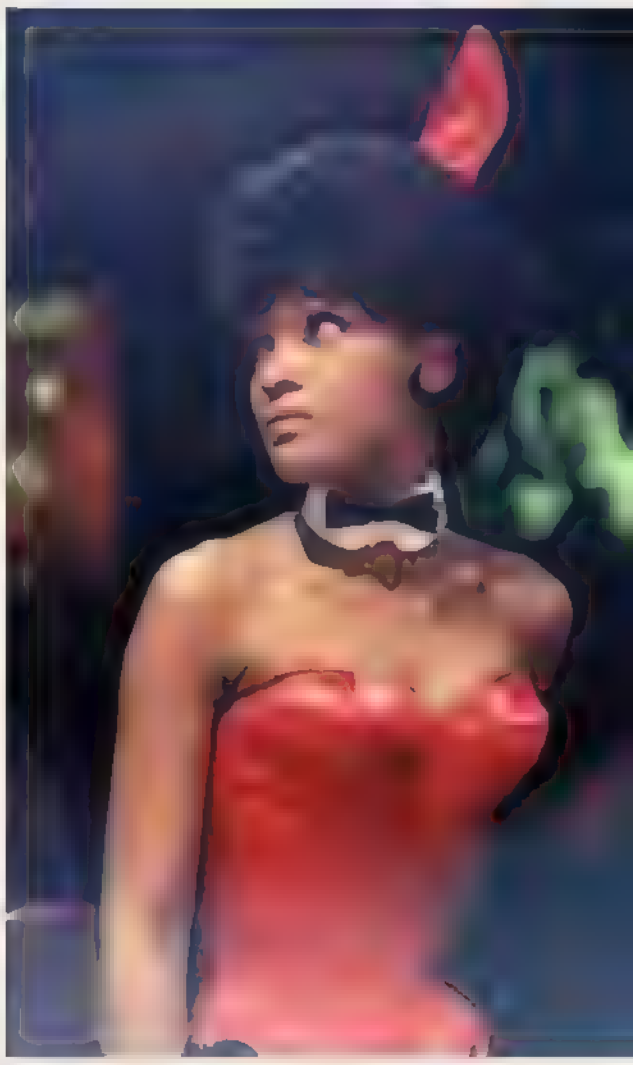
Small changes to the hare-raising getup have been made over the decades: the addition of the tuxedo collar and cuffs and a name-tag rosette, a tweak to the high-cut leg, a slight redesign of the ears, more accommodating cup sizes — but the Bunny remains as recognizable as ever.

By the time the suit turned 20, various versions were in use alongside the solid-color satin classic: suits with psychedelic patterns inspired by Emilio Pucci, a VIP suit in velvet, a lacy (and short-lived) cabaret version and a fur-trimmed green or red Christmas look. And not all Bunnies wore the famous suit; season, location and responsibility also dictated their attire, with noncorset-based outfits for Ski Bunnies, Croupier Bunnies, Beach Bunnies and others.

Today Playboy Club servers wear suits that were updated in 2005 with accessories by designer Roberto Cavalli. In 2018 Bunnies at the Coachella music fest wore a new green-leaf-patterned suit, but the original 1960 silhouette remains intact.

Since its appearance six decades ago, the Bunny suit has woven its way into the fabric of American culture, donned by everyone from Dolly Parton to Flip Wilson to Kate Moss. It was the first service uniform ever registered with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, and a complete Bunny costume can be found in the collection of the Smithsonian. Like other cultural mainstays, how it's seen often depends on who's looking at it, including the Bunnies themselves.

"Bunnies like wearing it for different reasons," says Beck, who sometimes fits new Bunnies into their suits. "Some see it as playful and nostalgic, others see it as badass empowerment. We don't need to define it for them."



Opposite page: *At Playboy's Lake Geneva resort guests could partake in various seasonal activities, from skiing to swimming to horseback riding, with friendly assistance from Bunnies (Playmate and Bunny Gwen Wong Wayne at far right)* ***Right:*** *Sandy Lawrence at the New York club, circa 1963*

1979 Playmate): The Bunnies were the sisters I never had. It was a unique sorority and a joy for me.

Francesca Emerson: We bonded like glue. Playboy was like a gigantic family of different people of different backgrounds and different cultures, all working hard to improve themselves. When we weren't working, we'd meet at each other's houses and have lunches and dinners together, participate in each other's kids' birthday parties, even take vacations together. Half a century later, I still have close friendships from the New York and L.A. clubs.

MISCONCEPTIONS

Donning the ears could come with some baggage

Marilyn Cole: I am shocked that I still sometimes have to defend myself for having been a Bunny and a Playmate. It was a woman who interviewed me. It was a woman who trained me. It was a woman who did PR at the club. playboy magazine's photo editor was a woman. The first woman gaming inspector in the U.K. casino industry had been a Playboy Croupier Bunny. I wish people knew that. Who would have thought we would have such an impact on social history? The Bunnies were pioneers. We stood for freedom.

Candace Collins Jordan: I wish people understood what a wonderful opportunity this was for women like me instead of thinking we were exploited. It was our choice to be Bunnies. We made great money and great friends and had wonderful opportunities that are now lasting memories. It was a priceless and life-changing experience for me and made me who I am today.

Jennifer Jackson: In the 1960s and 1970s, no one thought black people were pretty. And then people saw me as a black woman, and that black is beautiful, in all different shades. That was one of the things that we promoted.

Kathryn Leigh Scott: Former Bunnies include entrepreneurs, lawyers, judges, CEOs, professors, architects, restaurateurs, scientists and a few actors and writers — none of us turning in our satin ears to collect Social Security!

Angelyn Chester: Hefner sent a memo to corporate explaining that if it were not for the women, the Playmates and the Bunnies in particular, that the company would not exist, so they are to be respected and not harassed. He was ahead of his time when it came to policies like that.

GOOD TIMES , GREAT MEMORIES

From celebrity customers to softball stardom, the Bunnies and Rabbits led unforgettable lives

Pat Lacey: In Jamaica they had goat racing on the beach for guests to watch. Guys would climb the trees and grab fresh coconuts right off the palms. During the day, before six p.m., we wore a two-piece bikini, ears and tail, with flip-flops, and in the evenings the standard Bunny costume. I overstayed my visa and got booted from the country!

Elisabeth Clark, New York and Montreal clubs, 1965–1975 *(psychologist and psychoanalyst):* I was working the Playmate Bar one night, and this guy was at my station all by himself, wearing a hat and a raincoat. I took his order, scotch and water or something, and I served it to him. The bartender said, "Do you know who you're waiting on?" I said, "No, why?" And he says, "That's Paul Newman." I said, "Who's Paul Newman?"

Jeff Rector: Wherever we went, people were like, "Oh my God, it's the Bunnies and Rabbits from the Playboy Club." We could get into any club, anytime. We could get reservations at any restaurant. We really were treated like celebrities.

Francesca Emerson: Playing on the Bunny softball team is one of my favorite memories. It started as a charity event in the Chicago club and was so successful it spread throughout the clubs. The New York club's team was so competitive. Every Thursday at noon, the Dream Team, as we were known, played in Central Park; we wore black tights and orange sweaters with the Bunny logo on the front.

THE TAIL END

A parting thought from a beloved Bunny

Dale Bozzio: I'm the proudest Bunny. Everything I learned as a Playboy Bunny brought me to today. I'm 64 years old; I go on stage every month, maybe four times a month. I learned to be courageous and to be a proud woman and to know how beautiful I am. I learned to love myself. And that's where I'm coming from; that's how I write all my music. That's how I live my life, and that's how I've raised my sons.

Reporting by Tori Lynn Adams, Cat Auer, Andie Eisen and Michele Sleighel.

CLASSIC CARTOONS

"You got it. I'm only visiting ERA states this year."

"Frankly, Brother Dominick, your case appears to be without precedent, but it is unlikely that you can remain a monk."

"This year, I'm just giving fruitcake and vibrators."

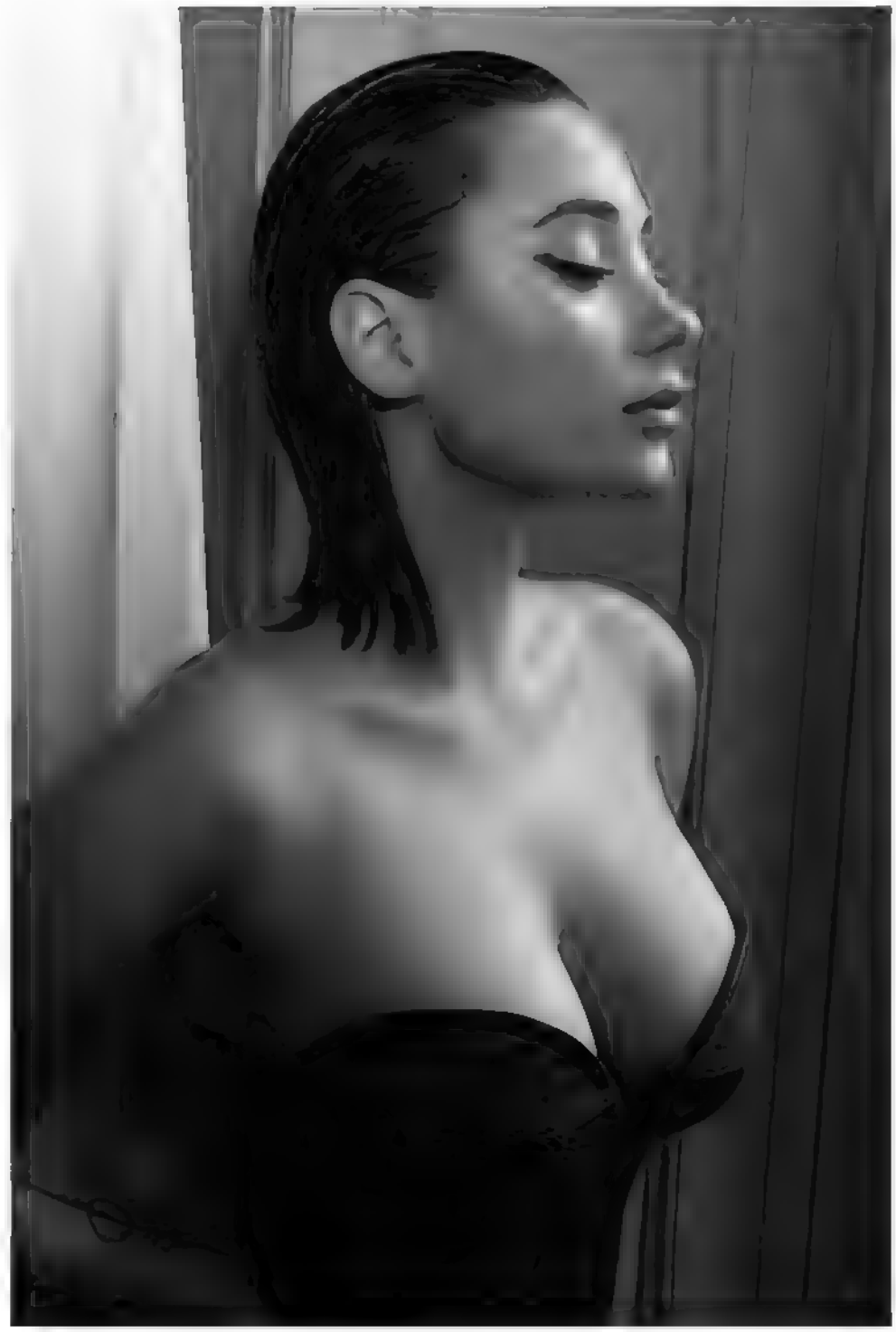
"How about a little Germaine Greer for a change?"

"You should be making as much as the pope!"

"But I don't want to meet a tall dark man. How about a tall blonde woman?"

Liya SILVER
Instagram @yourliya

Photography by **Jurij Treskow | @jurij.treskow**
HMUA **Christine Frame | @christineframe**
Stylist **Karolina Volbin | @Volbin**
Producer **Valentina Gurova | @valentinagurova**



Can you tell us a little about yourself? I have been modeling for 4 years, I love to travel and explore different cultures, I also love sports, horseback riding and skiing. In my free time, I paint and go to exhibitions and museums. I was engaged in choreography, which formed in me a love for cabaret. I am also a mother of two beautiful dogs, I am interested in training and their development.

Tell us some funny facts about yourself? I ride the subway without underwear.

What does your perfect day look like? I wake up early. I start my day by walking the dogs or exercising. I love a productive and creative day. I would also complete the evening with a meeting with friends and an interesting conversation.

What is your strong point as a professional? I see beauty and get inspired by my creativity.

If a director asked you to do a shoot or a show that didn't suit you, how would you react? As for some details of the shooting, I can always make changes. if I don't like the concept, I refuse.

After a difficult day, how do you usually relax? After a hard day, I like to spend time at home with a glass of wine and a good movie.

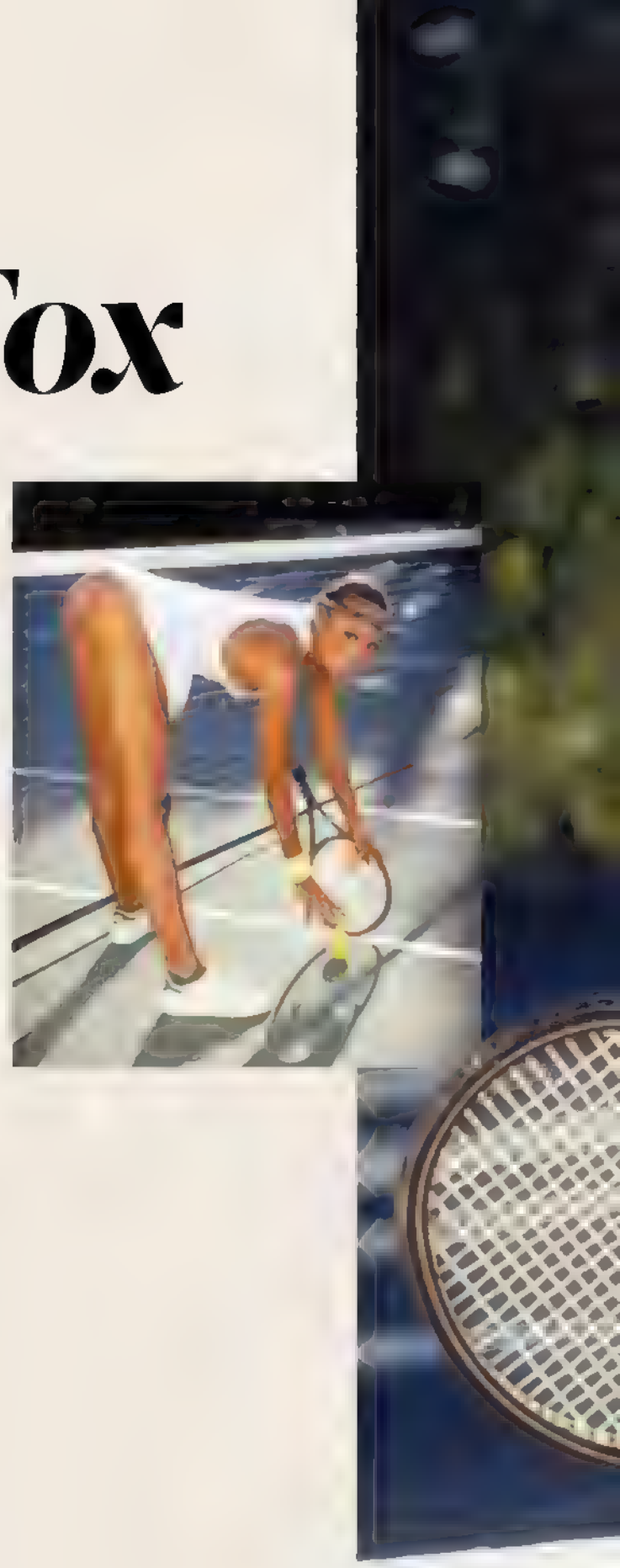
What do you do in your free time? In my free time, I visit new places, go out of town or spend my time at home reading or playing video games.

Do you consider yourself a creative person? Yes, creativity is an integral part of my life, it inspires me and gives me the energy to implement my plans.

What would you wish our readers? Continue to love beauty and enjoy aesthetics.

Annie Marie Fox

Our February 1982 Playmate on conquering both sides of the lens



Beneath a photo that shows me in midair, leaping into splits, my Playmate pictorial begins with this canny observation: "Anne Marie Fox is eager to get on with the business of being Anne Marie Fox." At 19, my ambition — and my impatience to make my own way in the world — was already apparent to my interviewer. Looking back, it's clear to me that playboy captured a turning point in my life. Although I didn't realize it at the time, my first experience in front of the camera catalyzed what would become my passion for working behind it.

• • •

When I was 11, I moved with my mother to West Germany, where I attended *Gymnasium* — an academics-focused secondary school. The German educators were just as strict as the Catholic nuns I was used to, but my time in West Germany was formative. I absorbed and adopted valuable aspects of the culture; discipline and a strict work ethic still shape my daily habits. Without my exposure to European culture, I doubt I would be as open-minded and liberal-thinking as I am today. Travel is truly the best educator.

It was while I was abroad that I discovered my first playboy, hidden in my German-language tutor's bathroom. I remember thinking, I wish I had a body beautiful enough to be in playboy one day. Seven years later, after I had moved back to the States, my adolescent desire came true.

I was a freshman at Mount Saint Mary's College in Los Angeles when I agreed one day to go shopping with my roommate, who drove us out to Sunset Boulevard. Her parallel-parking skills were iffy at best, so I stepped out and guided her into the only available spot. As I remember it, when we went to cross the street, a friendly young man approached us and asked if we would be interested in meeting with his boss — playboy's photo editor. We had happened to park directly outside her office window. My roommate and I glanced at each other, assuming it must be some sort of joke, then agreed to check it out as a dare. I expected the photo editor to be interested in my beautiful roommate, so it was a shock when she asked if I would consider posing. Playing along, I said, "Sure, why not?" "Fantastic!" she replied, then led me through the corridors into a massive, sun-drenched photo studio. The next day I received a call at my dorm informing me that Hugh Hefner had approved

This page and inset: *"I was photographed on the grounds of the Playboy Mansion, on the tennis court," Fox says. "Tennis was and still is my favorite sport, so I'm particularly fond of these semi-nude yet remarkably wholesome images."*

This page: *"This photo of me is a favorite. It actually exudes some palpable sensuality — it's hard for me to say that without laughing a bit."* ***Opening spread and opposite page:*** *Outtakes from Fox's Playmate shoot. "I received boxloads of fan mail from all over the world [illegible] response [illegible] mail still*

my Polaroid; I could begin the Playmate shoot as soon as my semester ended.

• • •

My experience on set was incredible. I was treated so well — even spoiled a bit — and felt I was working in a creative environment with consummate professionals. Each day afforded me new insights on photography, lighting, production design, hair and makeup, and my own physicality. Modeling for playboy was my first opportunity to experience both sides of the camera. I began to understand the symbiosis between subject and photographer.

The reality of being a Playmate didn't actually sink in until I saw my published pictorial for the first time. En route to a Playboy event, I picked up the magazine at an airport newsstand. As I flipped through the pages, I became distracted by a group of Japanese businessmen enthusiastically doing the very same. They spotted me and did a double-take at my Centerfold. We all shared a knowing smile.

After my PLAYBOY pictorial came out, I dabbled in fashion modeling and commercial acting. I signed with a few agencies and moved to New York City to enroll at the Stella Adler Conservatory of Acting, but unfortunately the climate of the early 1980s was not ideal for African American actresses. The only jobs I managed to secure were mostly for background talent and the occasional television commercial. This was hardly satisfying, so I began rethinking my options as an artist.

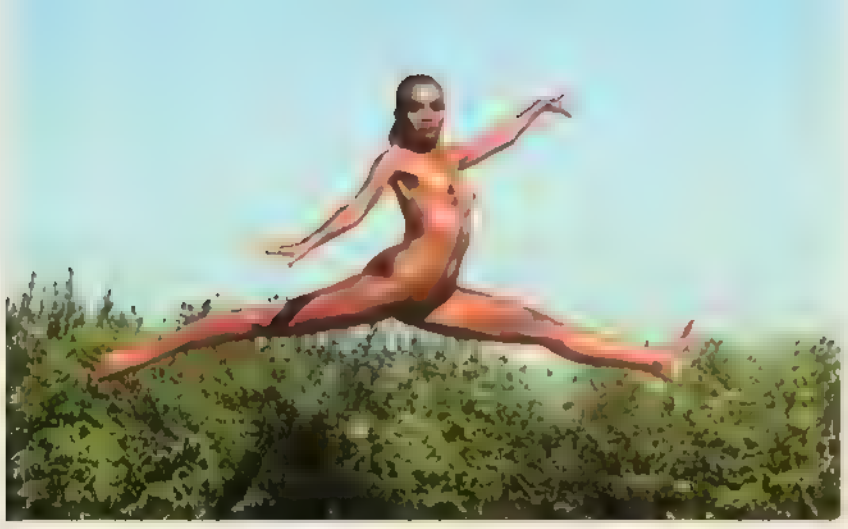
After four years honing my acting craft with Stella Adler, I attended Columbia University, majoring in English literature and minoring in film studies. Post-graduation, I applied to the International Center of Photography and was accepted. I apprenticed under the legendary Brigitte Lacombe and Nan Goldin, who equipped me with the technique and self-esteem to pursue photography professionally. Partly thanks to Goldin's encouragement, I came to realize my degrees from Columbia could be parlayed into a fulfilling photography career. This was a huge epiphany! Based on her unwavering support, I relocated to Italy after graduating to work on developing my first portfolio.

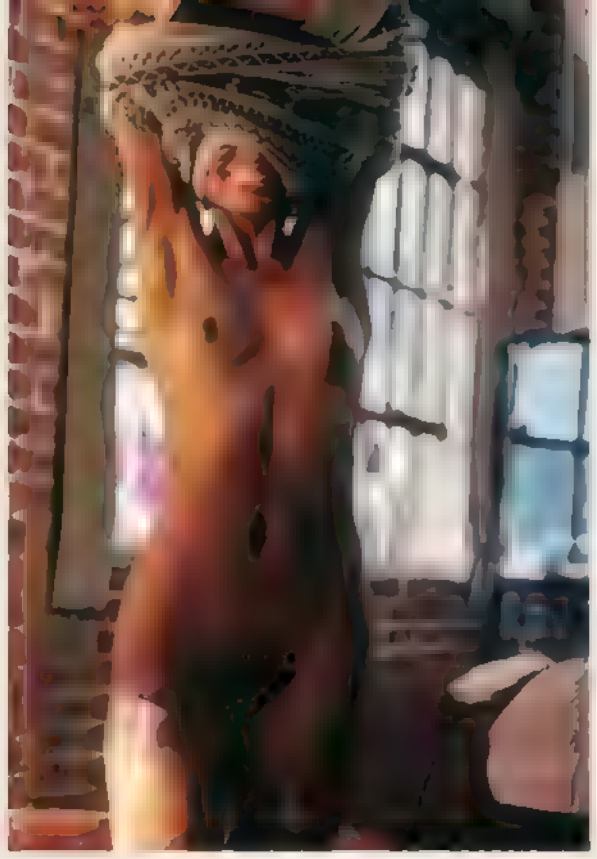
A few years later, I received an offer to head to London and be a photographer on the set of *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, directed by and co-starring Kenneth Branagh. My job was to capture the daily intensive prosthetics transformation of the lead actor, Robert De Niro, whose metamorphosis from man into the monster was fascinating to witness and to photograph. As his character evolved, so did the prosthetics — an extra scar here, a wooden limb there. It was my first foray into set photography, and I found every aspect of the work energizing. I remember as I stood gaping at the scale and authenticity of this period piece, a distinct sensation washed over me. I was finally in my happy place: a creative environment surrounded by screenwriters, acclaimed actors and an über-talented director, all of whom I genuinely respected and admired, and me, camera in hand, given free rein to document this fleeting endeavor.

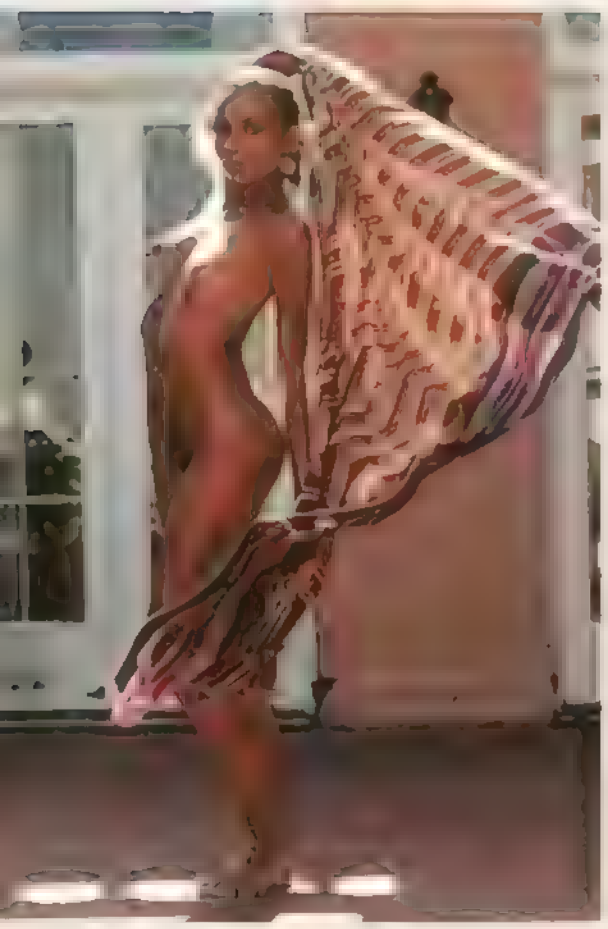
• • •

I still have specific career goals as a photographer that, hopefully, are not beyond my reach, and I can also envision myself writing and directing. But after more than 20 years in the industry, my larger dream has become to uplift and inspire others through my work. Each assignment still feels so visceral; each project takes up a sacred space within my subconscious. I want to establish myself as a dedicated image maker, storyteller and role model for

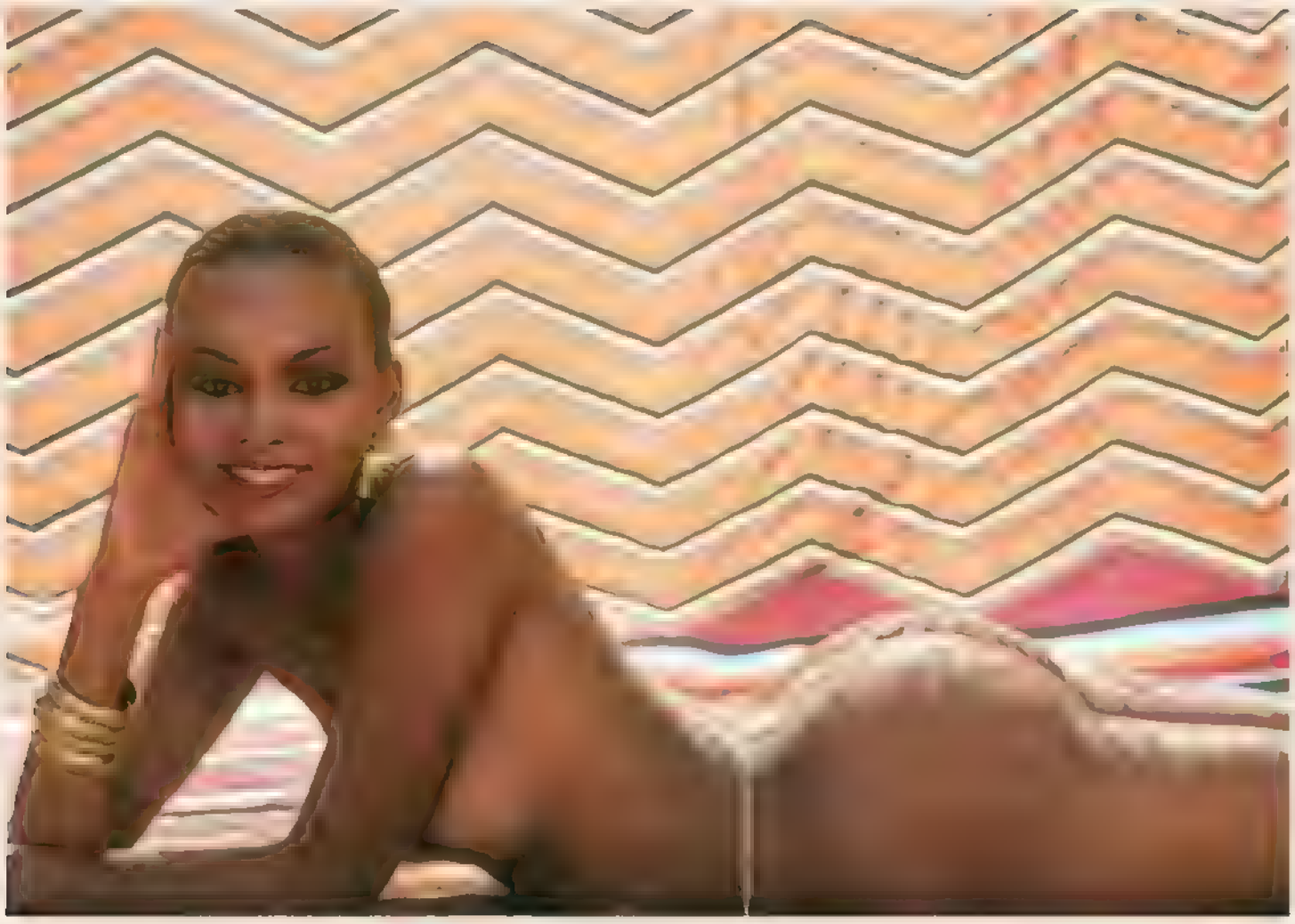
all women and especially women of color. As much as my life has changed since becoming a Playmate, I continue to evolve as an artist. I'll always be eager to get on with the business of being me.







My happy place: a creative environment surrounded by people I respect and admire.



Opposite page, top left: *"I was practicing my jumping splits poolside, and Phillip Dixon managed to capture me in midair. He was a wonderful photographer; he took almost all my pictorial photos. I'll admit I always had a little crush on Phillip."* ***This page, following page and remaining photos opposite page:*** *More outtakes from Fox's Playmate shoot. "My interest in photography played a crucial part in my decision to explore working as a model. I've always had a keen interest in classical painting and the nude figure as well, so when the opportunity to become a nude model presented itself as serendipitously as it did, it was a no-brainer to pose for playboy."*

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